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Wednesday
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Britain's newspaper
for Europe

The Guardian

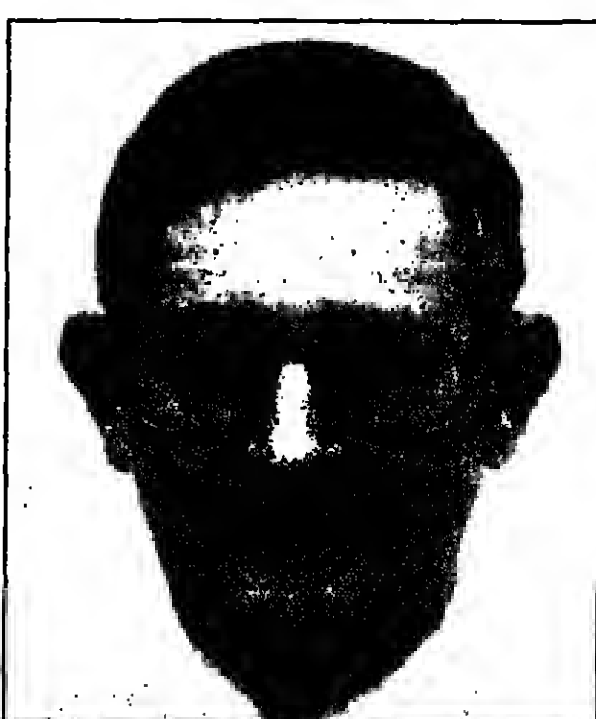
Toy wars

G2 with European weather

Peregrine Worsthorne in G2

G2 pages 12-13

The engineers who were told they would be safe in lawless Chechnia



The four hostages: from left, Rudolf Petschi, aged 42; Darren Hickey, 26; Peter Kennedy, 46; and Stan Shaw, 58. Granger Telecom defied official advice not to send staff to the lawless Russian republic after winning a £190 million contract

Four killed after 'bungled rescue'

Rory Carroll, and Tom Whitmore in Moscow

THE company which employed three of the four hostages decapitated in Chechnia stood accused last night of committing a series of misjudgments leading up to the brutal murders.

It emerged last night that Granger Telecom, which defied official advice not to send staff to the breakaway and lawless Russian republic after winning a £190 million contract, was in contact with the kidnappers as recently as last week. But attempts to extract the men from the clutches of

their abductors came to nothing with yesterday's gruesome discovery of four heads lined up beside a sack, in a plain view of passers-by, on a deserted highway 15 miles west of the capital Grozny.

The engineers were believed to be earning less than £25,000 a year. The size of the mobile phone installation contract with Chechnia Telecom had made the risk worth taking, said Granger, of Weybridge, Surrey, just 24 hours after the men were kidnapped at gunpoint.

Chechen authorities, who promised to name the murderers today, were not informed after they arrived, and armed security guards hired by the company were

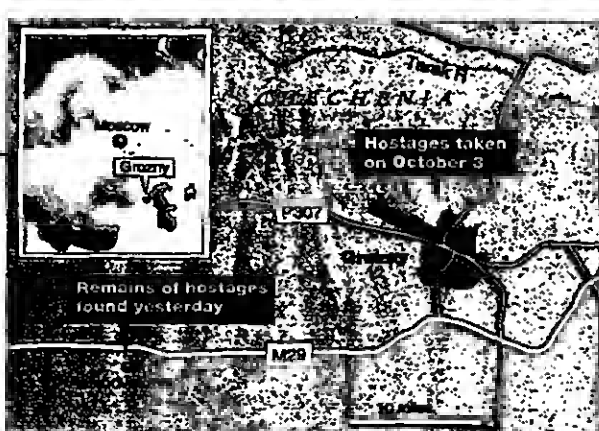
outgunned by the kidnappers, who burst into their fortified compound on October 3.

Paul Keetch, MP of one of the dead men, said: "They should never have been sent. Their employer gave them the assurances that they had been given by the Chechen authorities, which frankly amounted to nothing. These were worthless guarantees of safety."

Granger negotiated with the kidnappers via Chechen Telecom rather than the authorities, believing their business partners to be more reliable.

Granger's employees were Darren Hickey, aged 26, a single man of Thames Ditton, Surrey; Stan Shaw, 58, a New Zealander based at Weybridge; and Rudolf Petschi, 42, of Colchester in Devon. The fourth victim, Peter Kennedy, 46, of Hereford, was a consultant working for BT.

Yesterday Granger said it had been talking to the kidnappers. "We had opened dialogue with the kidnappers and received confirmation



that the hostages were alive as recently as last week."

A firefight between the kidnappers and another force, possibly a Chechen rescue team, preceded yesterday's discovery of four heads lined up beside a sack, in plain view of passers-by, on a deserted highway 15 miles west of the capital Grozny.

"We were especially shocked as we were making every effort to secure their release. We had opened a dialogue with the kidnappers and received confirmation the hostages were alive as recently as last week"

— Granger Telecom yesterday

day and told police where the hostages were being held. But that information reached the other captors, who decided to kill their captives, the ITAR-Tass news agency quoted Mr Maskhadov as saying.

Chechnia's national security chief said his forces had detained a man suspected of taking part in the killings, which have drawn condemnation from Russian President Boris Yeltsin and Tony Blair.

Mr Maskhadov blamed "foreign special forces" for the murders, which he said were committed to destabilise his country. When atrocities have been committed inside Chechnia Mr Maskhadov has consistently pointed the finger at Russia, which withdrew its troops after failing to suppress Chechen forces in the 1994-96 war.

Following the murder in 1996 of six Red Cross workers while they slept, he blamed the former KGB, which he said was running a dirty tricks campaign to discredit

Chechnia's bid for independence. After the war ended and unity among the warlords he commanded evaporated, Mr Maskhadov added international Muslim groups to his list of interfering foreigners. He accused Saudi-based Sunni Muslim groups of destabilising Chechnia as a precursor to the formation of an Islamic confederation in southern Russia.

Formally, Chechnia remains a part of the Russian Federation, but in reality it is beyond Kremlin control. The former head of Mr Yeltsin's security council, Boris Beresovskiy, admitted this yesterday and called for international help. An emergency meeting of Chechen security chiefs drew up urgent plans to track down the killers.

The victims' relatives were devastated. Hopes of their release had been raised last night to page 5, column 7

Pinochet lawyers consider challenge to law lords ruling

Poll shows Britain divided over general's extradition to Spain

Nick Hopkins and Alan Travis

LAWYERS acting for General Augusto Pinochet are considering whether they can mount an unprecedented challenge to the law lords ruling that the former dictator should face trial for alleged human rights atrocities.

Kingsley Napley, the firm representing the general, believes there may be grounds to refer the decision back to

the lords following revelations that Lord Hoffmann, one of the five adjudicators, is a director of a charity linked to the human rights group, Amnesty International.

The organisation has been at the forefront of the campaign to extradite Gen Pinochet to Spain.

Legal sources confirmed that Kingsley Napley was thinking of returning to the House of Lords to complain about Lord Hoffmann but admitted the route "had its complications". Nobody has ever

challenged a law lords ruling on these grounds, and clerks at the Lords, the highest court in Britain, were trying to work out if it was possible.

One former law lord, who spoke on condition of anonymity, thought the lawyers would have to show something extraordinary had undermined the ruling. "But what the process would be, I just don't know. I have never known this happen."

Professor Mike McConnell, of Warwick university's law department, suggested it might be possible for a new board of judges to rule whether Lord Hoffmann's links with Amnesty made it inappropriate for him to be involved in the Pinochet case.

Kingsley Napley is also working against the clock. The Home Secretary, Jack Straw, must decide by Friday

whether to allow the extradition hearings to start or send Gen Pinochet home to Chile.

The general's lawyers may also send a written representation to Mr Straw outlining concerns.

Amnesty said it was "very surprised" that Kingsley Napley was trying to make an issue of Lord Hoffmann's links with its charity, stating that his work had nothing to do with its campaigns against Gen Pinochet.

Mr Straw's decision will not be made easier by the results of the December Guardian/ICM opinion poll published today, which shows Britain is completely divided over whether or not Gen Pi-

nochet should be extradited. One third say he should be sent to Spain to stand trial for murder and torture, one third say he should be allowed to return home, while the final third are undecided.

The poll shows a clear party political breakdown within the electorate. Mr Straw will offend more Labour and Liberal Democrat voters if he refuses to allow the extradition request to go ahead. Conservative voters, on the whole, want to see Gen Pinochet allowed to return to Chile.

The strong support for extradition among Labour MPs is backed to a limited extent by their supporters. Labour voters by a margin of 41 per

cent to 33 per cent say, on balance, they want to see the general sent to Spain for trial. Liberal Democrat voters support that option by a margin of 44 per cent to 32 per cent. Conservative voters want him returned to Chile by a margin of 47 per cent to 23 per cent.

ICM interviewed a random sample of 1,123 adults by telephone between December 4 and 7.

Interviews have been conducted across the country and the results weighted to the profile of all adults.

Pursuit of tyrants, page 9; Leader comment and letters, page 9



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Albania US\$ 2	Czechia CZ 0.55	Hungary H 320	Lithuania LT 3000	Portugal E 280	Sweden SK 75
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In G2 EUROPE today: So, who was the greatest eighties icon? Boy George and Simon Le Bon slug it out

Francis Wheen, Britain's most irreverent columnist

Sketch

On-message with Barney and Jack



Simon Hoggart

YESTERDAY morning I ran into a Labour MP. He was just back from New York, where he had done a little Christmas shopping.

"I bought a New Labour doll for my granddaughter," he said. I expressed surprise that such a niche product should be on sale there.

"Oh, it's not labelled 'New Labour'," he said. "But when you pull the string, it goes: 'I love you'."

You love me.

We're a happy family."

After 18 months we're beginning to get the hang of New Labour. Yesterday I popped along to the committee on public administration, to hear Jack Cunningham, the Minister for the Cabinet Office, otherwise Lord High Everything Else.

Dr Cunningham, as he's at pains to remind us, works closely with the Minister, very near to 10 Downing Street.

Maybe he puts a saucer up against the wall to eavesdrop every night. He has certainly caught Mr Blair's style, which I would describe as a blend of baffling management jargon and folksy matiness.

He told us about the "substantial refocusing" of his work and described "giving strategic direction to the Prime Minister's programme."

He and his chums are "overcoming institutional boundaries," "ensuring effective delivery of the Government's central message," and "underpinning collectively agreed priorities."

At the same time they are going round calling everyone by their Christian names, chuckling cheerfully at oathing in particular, and talking, like Dr Cunningham, about typos, as if we cared.

Blair people over discuss a problem but "target an issue." They don't change things, but "bring direction and impetus

to modernising the Government's agenda", as he said yesterday.

The trouble is that they get a little wobbly when the jargon runs out. (The jargon does matter. It's the intellectual equivalent of Lego: it fits together very well, but you wouldn't want to live in it.)

And calling your interlocutor David instead of Mr Rufley, or "you miserable Tory bastard" does not necessarily get you out of trouble when David is asking you about the astounding bill for refurbishing your workspace.

Dr Cunningham said that the new Cabinet Office accommodation would cost, over four years, some £80 million. You or I might think this was a lot of money, but not so.

The minister read into the record all the other astonishing sums spent by other departments on refurbishing their new offices. The Foreign Office: £40 million over five years. The Northern Ireland Office, now installed in a magnificent palazzo at a cost of £65 million (quick mental arithmetic told me that the 600,000 households in Northern Ireland had thus paid more than £100 each to accommodate their masters in London alone — or rather we in Great Britain paid this amount on their behalf. I hope they're grateful).

Dr Cunningham read out these sums with lip-smacking satisfaction, as if they proved that he, by comparison, was a miser.

Only a politician, I reflected, would seek to excuse such grotesque overspending of public money by pointing out that other politicians spend even more.

Various Tories wondered why, given that Dr Cunningham's job specification included stopping ministers leaking maliciously against each other, there were so many malicious leaks against ministers.

He expressed himself astonished. "I can see nothing to be gained by a press secretary denigrating ministers."

Oh, dear. It's like a pirate saying: "I can see nothing to be gained by blind Pugh tipping the Black Spot to fellow workers in the huccaneering business." It may be true, but it rather misses the point.

Review

Erratic but gutsy, it's girl power 35 years on

Adam Sweeting

Ronnie Spector
Origwals, London

THANKS to Creation, the world's most post-modern record label and the home of such stellar British talents as Oasis and Primal Scream, the world is about to hear once again from Ronnie Spector.

It's 35 years since her first global smash with the all-girl phenomenon The Ronettes. Felty, provocatively multi-racial, and exuding altitudinal Spanish Harlem cool, The Ronettes made the Spice Girls look like Charlotte Church, the latest baby soprano to mount a charm offensive on the Christmas charts.

When the Beatles went to New York, Ronnie was invited to their hotel, was drooled over by John Lennon, then invited the Mopsters out for chicken and ribs.

Later, after marrying Wall Of Sound guru Phil Spector, she found herself padding around his California mansion, a raucous songbird trapped in Phil's epic paranoia.

She eventually prised herself free and has been pursuing a stop-start solo career ever since. Her lawsuit against him — probably the most colourful in pop history — has been running for donkey's years, although a resolution may finally be in sight.

Now, at 55, she has been recording again with Joey Ramone and former Ramones producer Daniel Rey, and Creation will release her.

This one-off show was just to remind everybody that riot

girls, All Saints, Alanis Morissette et al, were not where girl power began.

Ronnie's new recordings display some punch and panache and find her in remarkably good voice. Onstage her performance is by no means perfect, but it has its moments. She rasped out Don't Worry Baby like the "before" part of a throat-lozenge commercial. A guest appearance from the hipster Joey Ramone found our heroine singing at least a tone flat.

It wasn't clear whether the crowd had come to pay homage to a teen-pop icon or merely to escape the freezing cold outside, but they warmed steadily to Ronnie's buxom, ebullient stage persona. Once petite, Ronnie has blossomed into a fulsome facsimile of a full-scale operatic diva, her vast cleavage barely contained in her dress.

"Being here brings back great memories!" she rasped, in fluent Non Yawk-ese. "I really had a ball in the Sixties."

Highlights of her set cropped up at erratic intervals. Her version of You Can't Put Your Arms Round A Man, or struck an authentically somber note, while Be My Baby ignited an exuberant crowd reaction and Billy Joel's Say Goodbye To Hollywood seemed all too appropriate given her past.

After several stirring encores, Ronnie re-emerged in a red fur-trimmed Santa Claus cape with matching headgear, and delivered a version of Frosty The Snowman that worked its seasonal magic just as well as a whole bottle of brandy swallowed straight.

That gal's got guts.

Rival Labour camps clash over decision as Cunningham says 'malice and gossip' cannot be stopped

PO row spins out of control

Michael White
Political Editor

FRESH Whitehall turf war erupted yesterday as Jack Cunningham, the Cabinet Office "enforcer," admitted the near-impossibility of stamping out "spinning, malice, gossip and rumour" between rival government departments.

Mr Cunningham, who has a brief to eliminate damaging battles between rival spinners obscuring the Government's message, claimed he was making some headway in stamping out the problem.

But his comments came against the background of

comments from Treasury sources denouncing Peter Mandelson, the Trade and Industry Secretary, for flunking his first tough decision, over the future of the Post Office.

In the wake of Mr Mandelson's decision not to privatise the Post Office, Treasury sources — who were disappointed at losing a possible £2 billion to £3 billion from the proceeds of a sale — were quoted as saying that the decision was "rubbish" and "garbage".

It came after weekend reports that the Chancellor, Gordon Brown, had "lost" the Whitehall policy battle over privatisation last week. Mr Blair sided with Mr Mandelson and other Labour MPs

and ministers arguing the case for an independent, but publicly owned corporation on both economic and political grounds.

Although there is lingering ill-will between the two ministers, enhanced by policy rivalries, Mandelson aides deny fuelling the controversy at Mr Brown's expense.

What Mr Cunningham dismissed as "quotes cloaked in anonymity" surfaced in yesterday's papers as rival camps appeared to apportion credit and blame for the PO decision. Some reports suggested that John Prescott and Derek Hodgson, communications union chief, had scotched part-privatisation against Mr Mandelson's initial instinct.

That version was disputed. It was even claimed that far from wanting a sell-off, Mr Brown had told Mr Mandelson that option was politi-

cally impossible when they first discussed their shared agenda in July.

Mr Cunningham was yesterday quizzed by MPs about the £80 million cost of his office reorganisation and about "denigration of colleagues" by ministers and their aides.

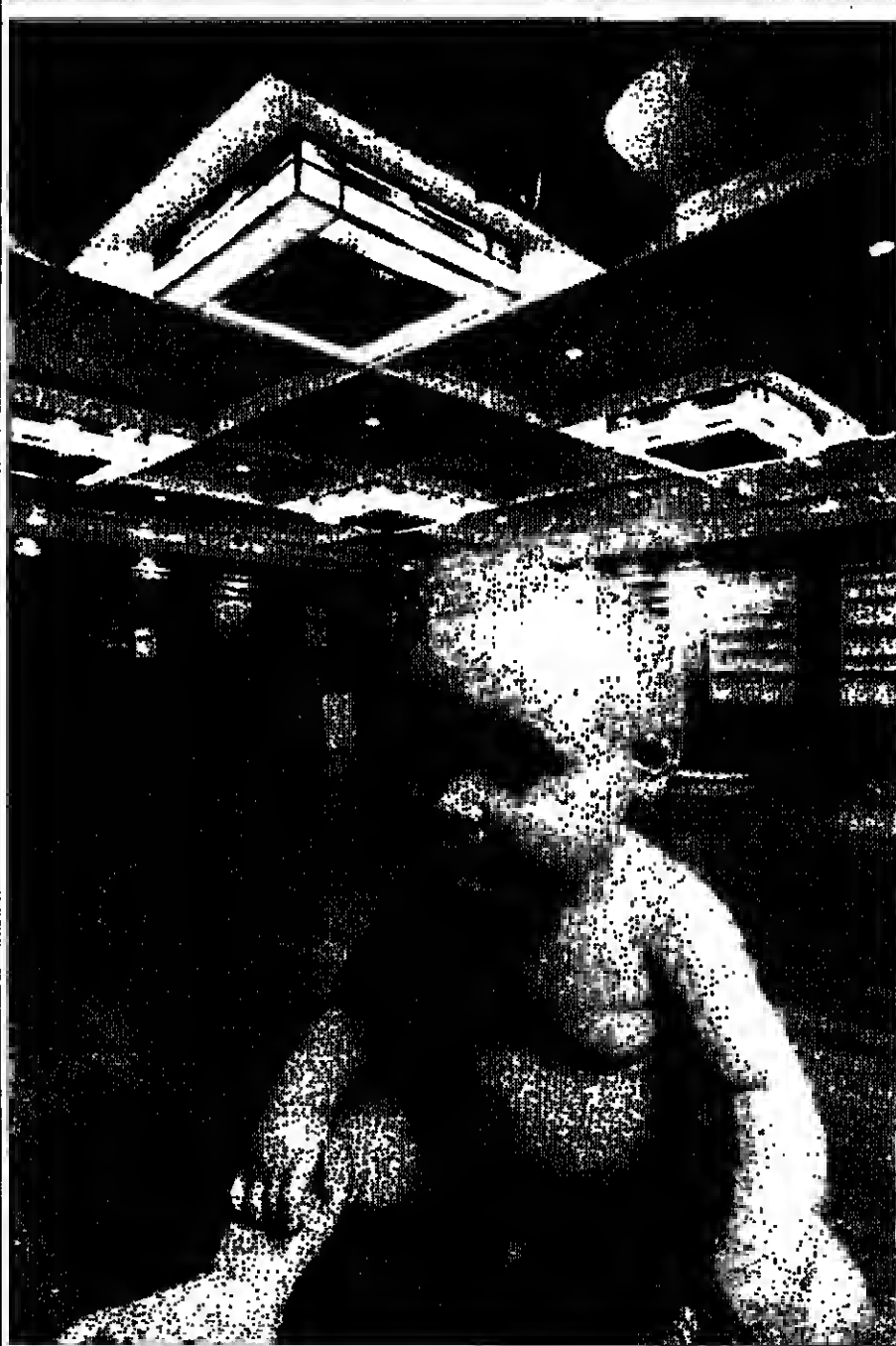
He told the public administration committee: "We are making progress. I think the situation is much improved, the Government's message is getting across clearly and effectively."

But he admitted that "spinning, gossip, malice and rumour" were inevitable. "It's never going to be eliminated totally, it's part of the stuff of politics."

After Tory MPs, led by Andrew Tyrie, had asked five times if Mr Blair's spokesman, Alastair Campbell, had briefed against ministers, Mr Cunningham replied: "I think it is inconceivable."

Mr Tyrie later said the reluctant answer made the truth "blatantly obvious".

For their part, the Conservatives accused British ministers of "spinning" their German colleagues into deceiving the electorate about tax harmonisation plans. They did so by quoting Oskar Lafontaine, the German finance minister, who said at an SPD rally in Bonn yesterday that "our British colleagues have asked us not to use the word harmonisation, but co-ordination".



Ron Mueck's Big Baby 2, which was sold for £41,100

PHOTOGRAPH BY GRAHAM TURNER

BritArt gets a boost as Saatchi sale raises £1.6m

Dan Galsider
Arts Correspondent

RUMOURS of the death of BritArt were proved to be premature yesterday, as the much-awaited sale of parts of Charles Saatchi's private collection realised £1.6 million.

Three recent Turner Prize winners — Damien Hirst, Rachel Whiteread, and Chris Ofili — all performed strongly in the sale, although one of the top prices was paid for a work by the comparatively obscure German artist Thomas Schütte.

The sale of over 100 works by more than 100 artists by the most influential art collector in Britain had been taken as an indication that the recent boom in contemporary British art, largely fuelled by Saatchi's acquisitiveness, was coming to an end.

But a combination of low prices for some of the lesser-known artists, convincing hype, and an enthusiasm for the work among collectors and City-based buyers meant that rather than undermining confidence in contemporary British art, the sale has probably served to strengthen the sector.

This, of course, will be a boon to Mr Saatchi, whose collection remains the largest and most important. Although the big names were all represented in the sale,

Best sellers

1. G. Schütte — Thomas Schütte: £139,000 (estimate: £80-120,000)

2. The Lovers (Spontaneous, Committed, Detached, Compromising) — Damien Hirst: £139,000 (est. £20-100,000)

3. Untitled (Square Sink) — Rachel Whiteread: £133,500 (est. £40-50,000)

4. Arctic Anhydride — Damien Hirst: £122,500 (est. £20-25,000)

5. Untitled No 122 — Cindy Sherman: £87,300 (est. £50-70,000)

6. Prop — Jenny Saville: £51,000 (est. £10-15,000)

7. Shop — Gary Hume: £48,800 (est. £18-22,000)

8. Lick & Lather — Janine Antoni: £46,800 (est. £8-10,000)

9. Two Three Leaf Clovers — Gary Hume: £42,200 (est. £10-12,000)

10. Big Baby 2 — Ron Mueck: £41,100 (est. £5-10,000)

collage by Sarah Lucas. That piece of work by a fully paid-up member of the YBAs sold for £14,500 against an estimate of £5,000 to £7,000. There was a palpable frisson around the crowded room when the next star attraction, a self-portrait by the painter Jenny Saville, fetched £45,000 against an estimate of £10,000 to £15,000.

A spot painting by Damien Hirst sold for £122,500 against an estimate of £20,000 to £25,000. And even a live installation by the artist Mona Hatoum sold for £8,200 against an estimate of £3,000 to £4,000.

There had been fears that Saatchi's custom of buying the entire contents of an artist's studio could rebound. But only seven per cent failed to find a buyer.

The buyers for the sale were not the usual art market habitués. The Americans, with a few exceptions, have not shown great enthusiasm for the output of the YBAs. That left the field open to a clutch of private European collectors, several from Germany, where the BritArt phenomenon gained some notoriety when the Sensation show travelled there. Otherwise, the sale seemed to be a playground for blue chip buyers.

The proceeds will go towards establishing bursaries for young artists. Mr Saatchi professed himself delighted with the results.

ID cards for young to be launched

David Hencke
Westminster Correspondent

NEARLY seven million youngsters aged from 12 to 21 are to be targeted next year by a Government-backed private company to buy a new £5 national identity card if they want to drink, smoke, gamble, or enter nightclubs.

Tessa Jowell, the health minister, and George Howarth, the Home Office minister, have agreed to the launch of the cards next February. They could bring in £35 million for the five organisations behind the firm if every adolescent buys one.

The scheme aims to replace the "Prove It" cards issued free by the privately owned Fortnum Group, allowing young-looking 18-year-olds to show they are old enough to drink in bars.

The new plastic cards, which are claimed to be "forge-proof", will contain the YBAs' acid for £14,500 against an estimate of £5,000 to £7,000. There was a palpable frisson around the crowded room when the next star attraction, a self-portrait by the painter Jenny Saville, fetched £45,000 against an estimate of £10,000 to £15,000.

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Tessa Jowell, who agreed to the new ID card scheme

Five organisations — led by the supermarket chain Sainsbury's, which sponsored delegates' ID cards at this year's Labour conference — are understood to have put up over £500,000 to start the scheme. The other four are the Tobacco Manufacturers' Association, the National Federation of Retail Newsagents, the Association of Convenience Stores, and Ladbroke, the bookmakers.

They are to set up a non-profit making company and intend to recover their initial money from sales of the cards. The cards will cost £3 each to produce, with the other £2 going on administration.

Andrew Chevris, who devised the scheme and will be

its administrator, said yesterday that no profits would be made and there would be no commercial benefits for the participating companies.

"If there is a large take-up we will reduce the cost of the card to £4 or give away the surplus. The whole aim of the scheme is to end underage smoking and drinking."

The 12 plus card would allow entry into cinemas; 14 plus the buying of airguns and entry into bars to consume soft drinks; 16 plus the purchase of cigarettes, lottery tickets, solve-its, and knives; 17 plus the buying of crossbows. The holder of an 18 plus card would be allowed to drink alcohol in bars and enter betting shops and casinos, and a 21 plus card would be for people "who wanted to enter nightclubs."

Mr Chevris said: "The card could also be used by people to prove they are young enough to travel half-price on public transport."

He rejected suggestions that the card could be used by the police to identify young people. "This is not meant to be a back door way of introducing identity cards."

But Colin Sparrow, head of Licensing at Sainsbury's, said last night: "The aim is not to make showing a card when buying alcohol or cigarettes compulsory at the moment. It would only be used when there was some doubt. How it develops will depend on how successful the scheme is."

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Dr. J. C. 15.12.98

FBI files shed new light on Sinatra's mob links

Martin Kettle in Washington on the release of secret papers

THE FBI yesterday dished the dirt — some of it true, but a lot of it not — on one of the greatest entertainment icons of 20th-century America, publishing nearly 1,300 pages of previously secret files on the late Frank Sinatra.

The documents, dating from the 1930s to the 1970s, were released under United States freedom of information law following 30 separate requests from news organisations and individuals after the death of the legendary singer and so-called Chairman of the Board on May 14, at the age of 82.

The documents cover everything from Sinatra's political views, including conflicting allegations of communist links, to claims that he evaded the military draft during the second world war, and kidnap threats against his children.

But the primary interest to researchers, who began sifting through the mass of unsorted documents yesterday, centred on whether they could shed light on Sinatra's links with mafia bosses.

Throughout the singer's life he was dogged by specific and detailed allegations of underworld connections. They became firmly entrenched in the public mind by the similarity between Sinatra and the fictional mob-supported crooner Johnny Fontane in the blockbuster Godfather movies of the 1970s.

But although Sinatra occasionally allowed himself to be photographed with mob leaders, such as Sam Giancana, and was known in his youth as a nightclub crony of the legendary "lucky" Luciano, he angrily denied any links with the mafia. The new documents will be assiduously combed for proof one way or the other.

"We aren't talking about that," an FBI spokeswoman, Linda Kline, said yesterday in response to questions about Sinatra's possible criminal connections. "We're just go-

ing to let the records speak for themselves."

However, one newly released FBI file from 1971 linked Sinatra with a veritable rogues' gallery of organised crime bosses — among them the New York mafia capo Carlo Gambino — in an alleged plot to extort \$100,000 from a former stockbroker named Ronald Alpert after a failed investment deal.

Sinatra also lost his Nevada gambling licence in 1963 after Giancana was seen in the Cal-Neva Lodge gambling casino in which Sinatra held a major interest. The gambling licence was restored in 1961.

There was no immediate sign of any documents which might help to establish one of the oldest allegations about Sinatra's mob links, that he acted as a go-between for Giancana in dealings with Ambassador Joseph Kennedy which helped finance the 1960 presidential election victory of the ambassador's son Jack.

The files did, however, contain many threatening letters received by Sinatra over the years. Copies of FBI telegrams noting the threats in dry official language, and reproductions of at least one handwritten note from a self-styled "psychic" who believed Sinatra was a member of the US — "West against East, East against West" — were included among the documents.

Some of the most remarkable documents showed that the FBI was tipped off against Sinatra more than once by the notoriously rightwing columnist and broadcaster Walter Winchell.

A 1944 Winchell item about alleged threats to kidnap Sinatra's baby was simply noted by the FBI. Much more seriously, Winchell claimed to have paid a doctor \$40,000 to be given a "physically ineligible" draft exemption during the second world war. An investigation found that Winchell's charge was baseless.

Another section of the papers included a March 1955



Ol' Blue Eyes is back... Frank Sinatra's death in May unleashed requests to open up the FBI files. PHOTOGRAPH BY PHIL STEIN

letter — written at the height of the cold war era of McCarthyite red-baiting — from special agents in the FBI office in Philadelphia to the bureau's director, J. Edgar Hoover. The letter said a confidential informant had "advised that Frank Sinatra, well-known radio and movie star, is a member of the Communist Party."

A separate memo from an agent in Detroit said sources had reported that Sinatra "was never active in the CP or related front group activities in the state of Michigan." The papers include a mug-

shot of the young singer, taken by a sheriff's office in Sinatra's home state of New Jersey in 1938 following his arrest there on seduction charges.

Other documents included a federal government report on the plane crash that killed Sinatra's mother, Dolly, a report of a 1966 bomb threat against Sinatra in Miami Beach, and a 1969 death threat in which Sinatra was given the option of a \$2 million donation to the Vatican in return for his life.

When he was forced to testify about his mafia links in

an appearance before the House of Representatives select committee on crime in the late 1960s, Sinatra accused the committee members of "indecent and irresponsible" action, in allowing underworld informers to deliver hearsay evidence.

Yet he personally approved the script for a 1992 CBS television mini-series, produced by his daughter Tina, which documented his role in making links between Giancana, the Kennedys and the mob-run teamsters union.

In a 1997 interview about the mafia, Tina Sinatra said:

"By the '30s and '40s, when Dad was in the [entertainment] business, they were controlling the nightclubs... My Dad grew up with gangsters next door... The great vein through Frank Sinatra is loyalty. There is an absolute commitment to friends and family. It's very Italian..."

According to the FBI, Sinatra had already seen the documents after filing his own freedom of information requests in 1978 and 1980.

The release yesterday included all but 25 of the documents on Sinatra in the FBI's possession.

2000 bug threat to defence systems

Richard Norton-Taylor

MORE than half the Ministry of Defence computer systems remain unprotected from the millennium bug, official figures showed yesterday, forcing the Government to acknowledge a real threat to Britain's armed forces and weapons systems.

George Robertson, the Defence Secretary, said the Government recognised that the bug problem "potentially poses a real threat to Britain's capabilities. But he insisted that "no computer failure... could result in a nuclear accident or the accidental use of nuclear weapons".

Ministry of Defence officials predicted that all RAF aircraft would be "mission capable" by May 31 next year and all Army weapons systems would be ready by September 1999. They were less certain about the Navy, saying only that all its ships were "planned to be Year 2000 compliant" by next August.

However, such confidence is not shared by all computer experts. Including some in Government, who say the risk is of complex computer systems crashing, rather than of accidental firing of missiles or other weapons. Some Whitehall experts say privately that computer systems could default in the run-up to the first day of 2000.

Only 11 per cent of the Navy's critical computer systems which need to be changed to allow them to cope with the year 2000 date-varying problem, according to the latest quarterly report provided by the MoD to the Cabinet Office. Although the figures are dated September, this still gives less than a year for the Navy to meet the official target of full 2000 compliance announced yesterday.

The report — which is on the MoD's internet site — says

only 18 per cent of the critical computer systems at MoD headquarters which needed to be made compliant are so far safe from the bug, and only 37 per cent of the RAF's critical systems. The term "critical" is applied by the MoD to systems which make a "direct and evident contribution to the maintenance of the UK's defence capability or where its failure has a clear safety implication".

The MoD is spending £200 million and employing 700 computer experts — some recruited from outside — to help its computers recognise the change to a new century.

Air Marshall John Dry, deputy chief of defence staff, said yesterday he was "absolutely confident that we will be able to fulfil all our key commitments".

Asked about reports that civil airlines were advising people not to travel on January 1, 2000, he said: "In the very first minutes of the millennium we will be checking out systems." That included, he added, air traffic control.

Mr Robertson said the MoD did not anticipate any serious problems with MoD systems delivering services to the public, including weather forecasts, and that the ministry was drawing up contingency plans in the event of problems with outside services, including telephones.

However, William Peden, of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, said he was not reassured by what he called "the bland words of the MoD". A spokesman for Greenpeace claimed the Government was still not doing enough to tackle the millennium bug and said some form of nuclear accident was still a possibility.

Britain, meanwhile, is urging other Nato countries to give priority to the millennium bug problem. Asked yesterday what the worst case scenario abroad could be, Mr Robertson said: "Quite a lot of things could go wrong."

Chattering pupil 'humiliated'

John Carvel Education Editor

GOVERNORS at an Oldham secondary school are investigating a complaint that one of their most experienced teachers punished a 12-year-old for chattering in class by writing the word "prat" on his forehead.

The alleged incident happened earlier this term when the pupil was making a nuisance of himself in a history lesson at Fallowfield, Greater Manchester, a mixed comprehensive with 1,450 pupils.

According to his mother, the boy was humiliated when he was publicly branded a fool by David Warburton, who has taught at the school for 22 years.

She made a formal complaint. The governing body and the local education authority are working out how best to respond.

David Johnson, the head teacher, said yesterday that Mr Warburton had taken vol-

untary leave of absence on full pay and would not return to work until the matter was resolved. "His absence was agreed by all parties and is a neutral act. It does not assume guilt. I can't comment on anything about an individual member of staff or say anything about the incident."

It was not clear last night whether the 12-year-old thought he was damaged by the alleged punishment or found the experience hugely funny. His mother said: "At first, my son came home as if it was some kind of joke, but I think he was quite upset. I think he felt humiliated."

John Johnson, chairman of governors and deputy leader of Oldham council, said the school and local education authority agreed that Mr Warburton should go on leave. "This is not a suspension."

No date had been set for Mr Warburton's return to school or time scale agreed for discussions on his future. "The current situation is one that everyone is comfortable with at present."

The Godfathers

SAM GIANCANA. Began his criminal career as a hit-man for Al Capone in Chicago's Little Italy district. By the 1930s he had reportedly murdered dozens of men in his rise to control the Chicago mob. Arrested 60 times, by the late 1950s Giancana dominated the gambling industry in Las Vegas and Havana, as well as Jimmy Hoffa's teamsters union. Giancana's Hollywood connections were legendary. Involved in a CIA-sponsored plot to kill Fidel Castro during the Kennedy administration. Died peacefully in Chicago in 1975.



CHARLES "LUCKY" LUCIANO. Sicilian godfather of the modern American mafia. A Prohibition era bootlegger, he rose to the top of the New York mob, taking over the dominant Genovese "family" in 1931. Luciano's gambling, narcotics and protection rackets made him the top target of anti-mafia law enforcement squads, and he was convicted for running a prostitution ring in 1936. Ten years later he was deported to Italy in return for easing the American conquest of Sicily in 1943-44. Died in 1962.



CARLO GAMBINO. The Palermo born boss of the most powerful Mafia family in postwar New York rose to power by murdering the leaders of his gang. Gambino dominated organised crime in Manhattan for two decades, amassing millions from his protection, gambling, prostitution and drugs empires. The "courtly capo" was one of the wildest of all mafia leaders.



For some the war in the Far East was over in August 1945. For others the battle still goes on.

This week marks the 57th anniversary of Pearl Harbour. The Japanese authorities have yet to make any meaningful restitution or apology for the terrible suffering endured by thousands of Allied servicemen and women, and civilians of all ages, who were imprisoned and interned between the attack on Pearl Harbour and the surrender in Tokyo Bay in August 1945.

With each day that passes the number of survivors becomes fewer. Before their lives fade into lonely and bitter memory, this is an appeal for people in Britain to show their deep feelings of dissatisfaction with the stance of the Japanese authorities and deliver a clear message. Send a Christmas card to the Japanese Ambassador, 101 Piccadilly, London W1V 9FN, as a peaceful signal of solidarity with this just cause.

This is 'people POWER' - make it work!

If you feel as we do that this is a matter that must reach a fair and just conclusion, and very soon, please also write to Robin Cook, The Foreign and Commonwealth Office, King Charles Street, London SW1A 2AH.

4 CHECHEN MURDERS

The Guardian Wednesday December 9 1998



Europeans are the most prized assets... a convenient way for warlords to buy weapons

Report: Tom Whitehouse in Moscow



Armed and dangerous... Chechen fighters in the devastated capital, Grozny, and far left, President Aslan Maskhadov, who blames the murders on the Russians

How the hostages ran out of time

UNTIL the discovery of their severed heads on a village roadside in Chechnya, southern Russia, yesterday, the best hope for the three captive British telecommunications workers and their New Zealand colleague lay in the greed and patience of their kidnappers.

In the war-devastated region, which has become the world's kidnapper capital, Europeans are the most prized assets because they can fetch million dollar ransoms. Hostage-takers have cynically drawn out negotiations to maximise desperation among the captives' families and employers, thereby helping to increase the ransom. While scores of Russian captives had been killed, until yesterday foreigners were served because of their value.

But in the latest case, the kidnappers' patience snapped after barely two months. It could have been as a result of a botched rescue attempt — but it is also possible that the captors had grown doubtful that a big enough ransom would be paid.

Two British aid workers, Camilla Carr and Jno James, were only freed from 16 months captivity last summer after the Russian business tycoon, Boris Berezovsky, gave computers and "humanitarian assistance" to Chechnya. Mr Berezovsky has substantial business interests in Chechnya because a crucial oil pipeline runs across its territory. Acting as go-between would have enhanced his reputation. His claim to have paid no ransom was widely ridiculed.

But given his substantial losses since the rouble's

August crash, Mr Berezovsky's philanthropy may have been curtailed. Instead of a high profile go-between, the men's employers, Granger Telecom, from Weybridge in Surrey, reportedly worked for their release through the Chechen company Chechentelecom, which commissioned them to install a mobile phone system in the capital, Grozny. It was while living in Grozny during the installation work that the men were kidnapped on October 3.

A fruitful relationship between Granger and the Foreign Office was always unlikely as the company ignored its strict advice to keep away from Chechnya.

But relying on a Chechen organisation to present its case would have cheapened Granger in the eyes of the Foreign Office and raised doubts about its ability to raise a

substantial ransom. Though the Foreign Office refuses to pay ransoms, having it involved in negotiations would have reassured the captors they were being taken seriously.

Kidnapping became Chechnya's most profitable business after the mainly Muslim region descended into anarchy following its 21-month war of independence with Russia, which ended in August 1996. But abduction is a centuries-old tradition which, as a result of overwhelming poverty and devastation, has revived in the war's aftermath.

For foreigners, Chechnya is now a far more dangerous place than it was during the war. Despite the Chechen victory, Russia has still to accept its formal independence, blocking international recognition and economic recon-

struction. Though kidnapping is a source of ready cash for the few, it condemns Chechnya to isolation.

Chechen officials last week said 111 people were being held for ransom in the breakaway republic. Among them is an American charity worker, Herbert Gregg, who was kidnapped in November 12, and Vincent Cochetel, a French employee of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, who was taken in January from Vladikavkaz, a city 30 miles from the Chechen capital, reportedly by a gang operating from Chechnya.

No longer can the families of kidnap victims cling to the thin consolation that no foreign captive has been killed. Instead they must renew efforts to raise ransoms which, on past experience, can reach a million dollars.

Last June a Swiss engineer, Peter Zollinger, who was helping to build an airport in Nazran, a town just outside Chechnya, was released after nine months captivity following the payment of \$500,000.

Five Polish aid workers were given a \$3 million price tag by their captors before being freed in February by Chechen special services.

Four Russian journalists were freed after their employer, the NTV television network, paid at least \$1 million. NTV's chief executive, Igor Malashenko, said the Chechen authorities themselves were behind the kidnapping racket.

The kidnappers' uncanny ability to stay one step ahead of the police does suggest they have a close relationship with the authorities. The Chechen president, Aslan Mask-

hadov, purged his government earlier this year of his fiercest critics and perhaps removed the kidnappers' official sponsors.

But outside the government, his rivals are arguably even more destructive of Chechnya's prospects. But that may be their goal.

Some of the fighters whom president Maskhadov commanded during the war with Russia want to establish a wider Muslim federation in the southern Russian region, linking Chechnya with its neighbours, Ingushetia and Dagestan.

Priming Chechnya's continued isolation through kidnapping is one tactic in a wider strategy to prise the Russia's Muslim republics away from Moscow.

"If by killing these four men, their captors wanted to damage President Maskhadov

and blacken Chechnya's future prospects, they have certainly succeeded," said Chris Hunter, director of the Quaker-backed Centre for Peace-making and Community Development, the charity which employed Mr James and Ms Carr in Chechnya.

President Maskhadov yesterday blamed Russia's secret services for the murders and kidnapping.

Rather than unite in victory after giving the Red army its bloodiest nose since Afghanistan, Chechnya's warlords are now split and foreigners are not the only victims. In October, the head of the anti-kidnapping squad, Shadid Bargishev, was killed outside his office.

Like the heroin business in Afghanistan, kidnapping in Chechnya is a convenient way for rivals to buy weapons and pursue political goals.



Yellow ribbons and carnations in a village where hope has given way to stunned grief

Report: Helen Carter and Amelia Gentleman



The father and sister of Darren Hickey. Eamon Hickey asked: 'Why would they kill them with nothing to gain?' Left, the company's flag at half mast

Horrorified families mourn victims

THAMES Ditton, Surrey, was in mourning yesterday at the news of the brutal execution of Darren Hickey, the much-loved son of the village publican.

Yellow ribbons had been tied to lamp posts and shop windows along the main street. A bunch of carnations laid by the village war memorial summed up the feelings of devastation. "Sorry," the message on the flowers said. "What can we say — we think of you."

For the past two months since his kidnap, Darren's parents, Eamon and Maureen, and his grandmother, Marie-Anne, had struggled to carry on as normal. The Crown Inn remained open and became a focal point for friends and family.

Every day regulars, bar staff and the Hickey family listened to news bulletins. Friends said Mr and Mrs Hickey had never given up hope that their 27-

year-old son — described as "a real softie, a lovely man" — was alive. But by yesterday, when news of Darren's murder was confirmed, the pub television was switched off and the doors of the Crown were closed to everyone but close friends and family.

Just days earlier the Hickeys were given cause for hope when they learned that Darren had been able to telephone colleagues at Granger Telecom in Weybridge, reassuring them that he was well but hungry.

Visibly distressed, Mr Hickey said last night: "Only last week we heard from Darren and knew that he was alive and well. He said the conditions they were being kept in were not too bad. It was a call full of hope. Now this... it's all too much to take in. The whole thing doesn't make sense. Why would they kill them when they had nothing to gain?"

The family had hardly appreciated the seriousness of the situation in Chechnya

when Darren was sent there, and they knew nothing of the Foreign Office's warning not to travel there. Any anxieties they felt were quelled by the company's assurances that the men would be accompanied at all times by bodyguards.

Relatives said Darren had viewed the trip as an exciting challenge and a chance to further his career.

His sister, Deborah, 21, and brother, Kieran, 24, were struggling to take in the news. Deborah said: "He was my big brother. He went out to travel and see the world. The only thing I know now is that he's not coming home."

"God knows what we are going to do now. We never thought for a minute that he would be killed. We are all devastated."

Seven miles away, at Granger Telecom's headquarters, flags were lowered to half mast as a mark of respect for the four employees.

The company's chief execu-

tive, Ray Verth, looked shocked as he read a statement expressing devastation at the murders. "Their murder is an appalling and barbaric act and our thoughts go out to the families... We are a small, tightly knit company and everyone here is in a state of shock."

Stanley Shaw's wife, Lily, left their home in Surrey with their four-year-old daughter, Priscilla, to spend Christmas with her family in New Zealand three days ago. Outside her bungalow there were more yellow ribbons tied to trees.

Before she left she had told friends: "Priscilla has been crying for her daddy every night. I've tried to carry on as normal, but it has been very hard."

The wife and father of the language specialist, Rudi Petsch, were away from their homes in Colliumpton, Devon, yesterday. The former soldier, who was fluent in Russian, had been recruited to help the British workers liaise.



Ray Verth, chief executive of the firm employing the murdered men: 'Everyone is in shock' PHOTOGRAPH BY TONY COOPER

'They should never have been sent. Guarantees were worthless'

continued from page 1

week after the kidnappers allowed them phone Granger.

Speaking outside her family's pub in Thames Ditton, Surrey, Deborah Hickey, 21, was unable to understand how anyone could kill her "lovely" brother, Darren, 26.

"God knows what we are going to do now. We never thought for a minute that he would be killed. We were told that it would be okay but after today I won't believe anything anymore."

Company flags at Granger's Weybridge headquarters were flown at half-mast. Carnations and yellow ribbons were left outside the houses of the victims.

At an emotional press conference Ray Verth, chief executive of Granger, said the murders were an appalling

and barbaric act. "Our thoughts go out to the families to whom we offer our deepest condolences. We are a small, tightly-knit company and everyone here is in a state of shock."

"We were especially shocked by this horrific news as we were making every effort to secure the safe release of the hostages."

"Our only concern now is for the families to whom we offer our deepest condolences. We have been providing them with every support and will of course continue to do so."

The company said negotiations had become "very active" but refused to say whether a ransom demand had been made or any money paid.

The Foreign Office opposes payments.

Granger Telecom

Overhaul of care in the community

Civil liberty row on mental health law

David Brindle, Social Services Correspondent

MINISTERS were last night squaring up for a clash over civil liberties after it was confirmed that a £700 million overhaul of care in the community would be bolstered by sweeping legal changes to enforce treatment of mental disorders.

Frank Dobson, the Health Secretary, promised that the overhaul would mean more secure beds for mentally ill people and the creation of "assertive outreach" teams to keep tabs on patients living outside hospital. These moves were broadly welcomed by mental health groups.

However, he made clear that the Government anticipated legal changes to "ensure compliance with appropriate treatment" and was also discussing with Jack Straw, Home Secretary, plans for a new form of renewable detention for people with personality disorders considered unmanageable.

This follows the case of Michael Stone, convicted of the killings of Lyn and Megan Russell. Stone had previously been deemed unmanageable. The proposed changes would apply to those thought to "pose a grave risk to the public", regardless of whether any offence had been committed.

Main points

- £700 million extra funding for mental health over three years
- Legislation to ensure compliance with treatment
- Extra secure beds
- Assertive outreach
- Teams to work with mentally ill
- New form of renewable detention for severe personality disorder
- Special hospitals are to stay

The Government insists that its measures will be acceptable to the European Court of Human Rights, but anxieties are already being expressed.

Julia Neuberger, chief executive of the King's Fund health policy institute, said: "We are extremely concerned about the human rights implications of some of the Government's suggestions."

"We must have a balance between securing public safety and honouring the rights of individuals."

Simon Hughes, Liberal Democrat health spokesman, said: "By forcing patients to take their medication against their will, some will be kept drugged up to stop them causing trouble."

"This is not treatment, but incarceration."

The planned legal changes were outlined in a document setting out a strategy on mental health, after which Mr Dobson called the "failure" of care in the community. Although the strategy had

been billed as the scrapping of care in the community, it will in reality shore it up. A cumulative £700 million extra will be spent over the next three years by the NHS and social services, at least 5500 of which will be earmarked for specific, Whitehall-approved schemes.

Mr Dobson gave little further detail. Decisions on legal changes and expansion of secure bed provision remain dependent on reviews still in progress.

He stressed, however, that "the safety of the public must be the prime concern."

The strategy was welcomed by Jayne Zito, who founded the Zito Trust to campaign on the failings of care in the community after the killing by Christopher Ciumis of her husband, Jonathan.

"The combination of new money, new resources and new powers will go a long way to repairing the terrible damage inflicted by a policy which was so ill conceived and so badly implemented

that it quickly became disreputable and dangerous."

The schizophrenia charity, Sane, also applauded the strategy as "better than expected". Marjorie Wallace, the chief executive, said: "We must prevent the headline cases by intervening earlier to protect the liberty of patients themselves, the families, the victims and the public."

"We therefore accept the need that doctors should have earlier powers to recall for treatment people who are not taking their medication and deteriorating in the community."

The National Schizophrenia Fellowship, however, expressed "deep disappointment" at the funding commitment, pointing out that only £150 million extra would be available next year.

Cliff Prior, the chief executive, said: "This is a package with glossy wrapping, but when you look inside it's half-empty." The charity had called for an extra £15 billion over three years.

Ethna Kilduff, co-chair of United Kingdom Advocacy, representing users of mental health services, accused the Government of double standards in condemning the stigma of mental illness, and encouraging users to help plan services, but then launching a policy that "panders to damaging popular prejudice".



John Prescott in central London yesterday... 'there's a public mood for change'

PHOTOGRAPH TOM JENKINS

Congestion tolls will free traffic, says Prescott

Keith Harper, Transport Editor

CONGESTION and parking charges which could raise up to £1 billion for local transport schemes could be operating within 18 months in cities throughout Britain, starting with traffic-congested London, the deputy prime minister John Prescott promised yesterday.

Pointing out that it takes longer to travel across London today than it did by horse and cart 100 years ago, Mr Prescott

said that if the Government did not act now, the country would be facing gridlock. "Traffic congestion is a major problem requiring a radical solution, and road user and workplace parking charges are part of the answer."

Over the next six months, the Government will ask local authorities whether they want to back the idea with schemes of their own. According to Mr Prescott, about 150 towns and cities will take part. Local authorities will be allowed to spend all the money they raise on providing better local transport, such as park and ride

schemes, special bus lanes and more train services - if their schemes are approved by the deputy prime minister.

Both Mr Prescott and transport minister, Dr John Reid, denied that some of the money raised might be taken by the Treasury and used for other purposes. However, there are no plans to introduce legislation for at least 10 years, Mr Prescott conceded. That means that when a new law is introduced money raised from charging the motorist could be diverted to other purposes. Once the consultation period is over, the Government will

work with authorities to help them draw up charging schemes tailored to transport improvements. They will be put into practice under the necessary legislation is passed.

Mr Prescott's view is that urban road charging will take one or two main forms. Motorists will be charged for leaving or driving a vehicle within the boundary of a designated area. Most schemes will be based either on a requirement to display a permit, or on electronic charging based on a monitor in a vehicle and equipment on the roadside.

Nine-month suspended sentences for 'grave robbing' couple who stole flowers to sell in shop

Florists convicted of cemetery theft

Stuart Miller

A FLORIST collapsed in court yesterday as he and his wife were found guilty of stealing flowers from a cemetery. The judge likened the crime to "lifting the lid off a coffin".

David Scott, aged 61, and his wife Mary, 45, were convicted at Durham crown court of four charges of taking floral tributes from the garden of remembrance at Preston cemetery in North Shields, Tyne and Wear.

After the court had been adjourned for 10 minutes to allow Scott time to compose himself, Judge Denis Orde told the couple: "You are a couple of grave robbers who committed a shabby, heartless piece of stealing. Nobody with an ounce of decency would do what you did."

The Scotts, of Gateshead, each received a nine-month prison sentence, suspended for two years, and were each ordered to pay £500 in prosecution costs. A fifth charge of theft was dropped earlier.

The thefts came to light in April when the cemetery's caretaker, Miriam McCann, spotted a woman in the garden of remembrance as it was getting dark. When Ms McCann approached, she saw Mrs Scott carrying floral tributes out of the garden, although she put them down before leaving. Mr Scott was seen to be keeping watch.

Police later found two memorial cards stolen from flowers, one in the couple's car and the other in their home. One message read: "To a precious man who is now in peace."

Brian Forster, prosecuting, told the jury the flowers were being stolen to be sold in the Scotts' shop, and they had been caught red-handed.

The couple vehemently denied the allegations. They were unlikely candidates to be involved in such a crime because they had been running a reputable business and had never been in trouble with police before, said Stephen Duffield, defending.

In mitigation, the court also heard that the couple had been forced to move home because of abuse they had received since the allegations became public. They were subjected to threatening telephone calls, death threats and poison pen letters, while their van was petrol bombed and their daughter had been forced to change school.

The couple had to sell their business and now relied on invalidity benefits. "Their punishment has been very much greater than the loss of their good names," Mr Duffield said.

The judge told them they would have to put up with these difficulties. "You have been found guilty of raiding that cemetery in the hours of darkness when nobody would have been about, and doing it time and time again. It was a crime of grave and serious nature."

Outside the court, Emma Dorn, granddaughter of Ethel Houston, floral tributes to whom were stolen by the Scotts, said: "It was shocking when we found out. I think they're sick individuals. Our family will now take new flowers to the cemetery to honour my grandmother."



Mary and David Scott leaving Durham crown court yesterday. David Scott collapsed in court on hearing the guilty verdict for a crime which the judge said was like 'lifting the lid off a coffin'

PHOTOGRAPH: RAOUL DODON

Blacks stopped five times as often as whites

Duncan Campbell, Crime Correspondent

BLACK people are five times more likely than white people to be stopped and searched by police, despite police forces being urged to examine their reasons for such stops, according to a report published yesterday by the Home Office. They are also more likely to be arrested.

There were eight racial murders in Britain in the last two years. The murders of black people were less likely to be caught than those of whites or other ethnic groups, says the survey.

Home Office minister Paul Boateng yesterday described the report, Statistics on Race and the Criminal Justice System, as a "vital tool" in dealing with injustice in the criminal justice system. Penal reform groups found the figures disturbing.

A million stop and searches were carried out during 1997/8 under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act of which 11 per cent were of black people and 5 per cent Asian. Two per cent of the population over 10 in England and Wales is black and 3 per cent Asian. The report indicates the use of stop and search powers varies greatly between forces.

Of 2 million arrests during the period, 7 per cent were of black people, 4 per cent Asians. The report also found that arrested black people

were less likely to be cautioned and more likely to be sent to prison. Eighteen per cent of the prison population was non-white. Of 1,250 homicides recorded between 1996 and 1998, 9 per cent were of black people, 6 per cent Asian and 3 per cent of other non-white ethnic origin. Eight of the homicides were recorded as being racially motivated. The number of racist incidents was up 6 per cent last year to a total of 13,880. One reason suggested for the increase was better reporting. The report also found that ethnic minorities were underrepresented in the criminal justice agencies.

Paul Cavadino, of the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders, said it was worrying 32 per cent of the prison population was black compared with 2 per cent of the general population. "No one can seriously argue that black people are six times more likely to commit crime than white people," said Mr Cavadino. "The evidence overwhelmingly suggests that black people who offend are more likely to end up in prison than comparable white offenders."

Colin Bailey, chief constable of Nottinghamshire and chairman of the Association of Chief Police Officers race and community relations sub-committee, said: "The police service will challenge police policy, practice or behaviour, which has racist consequences and demonstrate fairness in every aspect of policy."

Women in sport 'are ignored by media'

Viviek Chaudhary, Sports Correspondent

SPORTSWOMEN are virtually ignored by the media despite their success at national and international level, according to a three-month survey of the sports coverage of two national newspapers and BBC1 and Independent Television.

It claims that the lack of attention is hindering the progress of British sportswomen and their chances of landing lucrative sponsorship.

Not only were sports played exclusively by women overlooked but women playing the same sports as men, such as tennis, football and various athletics events, received fewer column inches and less air time than men.

The survey was conducted by Tamara Mason, a sports science and administration student at Nottingham Trent university. She recorded sports programmes on BBC1 and ITV and analysed every sports article in The Times and The Sun newspapers between February and May this year.

Despite the past success of female athletes such as Denise Lewis and Fatima Whit-



Sharron Davies: not newsworthy

bread, tennis players, and swimmers such as Sharron Davies, only 0.5 per cent of all sports stories in The Sun featured women. In The Times, only 10.9 per cent featured women.

During the period of the survey, ITV programmes, averaging 70 minutes in length, made no reference to women's sport. BBC1 programmes, averaging 61 minutes, devoted 17 minutes per programme to female sports, 42 minutes to men, and 22 minutes to sportswomen and women.

With hundreds of thousands of women playing sport

in Britain, and female rugby and football increasing in popularity, Ms Mason claims that audiences would watch female sports if the media gave them more coverage. About 60,000 women are registered netball players in Britain, 45,000 are registered with the Football Association, and 800,000 of various ages belong to swimming clubs.

"It's a vicious circle. No coverage means fewer chances of sponsorship and that makes it difficult for the sport to develop."

"I am shocked at the discrepancy. We all know that sportsmen get more coverage than women, particularly with football, rugby and cricket, but women also play these sports and female sport is thriving. But the media are not giving the public a chance to get interested in sportswomen."

While some argued that sports like netball and female football would not attract audiences, televising them had proved successful in other countries. Live netball matches were regularly broadcast in Australia and many European countries showed women's football live. All the matches at next year's women's football world cup in America were to be



On the ball... Women's sport could attract huge audiences

PHOTOGRAPH: TOM JENKINS

televised live and many Latin American countries showed live women's volleyball, attracting huge audiences.

Atilla Szabo, senior lecturer in sports psychology at Nottingham Trent university, who supervised Ms Mason's research, said: "Women's sport could attract huge audiences. Male sports have always been more popular but

this is a historical heritage which must be challenged by the media and the Government."

Jennifer O'Neill, editor of On The Ball, a women's football magazine, said: "The lack of publicity has hindered the development of women's football."

A spokeswoman for the Football Association said: "Women's football is not on the media agenda even though it is one of the fastest growing areas of the game. Media coverage would help attract sponsors and promote the image of the game. There has been an increase in coverage but a lot of it focuses not on the game but how the players look, and this does not help."

Minister backs attack on rigged UK car prices

Ewen MacAskill, Chief Political Correspondent

THE Government signalled yesterday it will support an end to the UK motor industry's price rigging that sees British motorists pay around 50 per cent more for new cars than continental buyers.

The industry was scathingly criticised yesterday in a report by the Commons trade and industry select committee, which called for the anomalies to be ironed out.

The cost of a Ford Mondeo is 58.5 per cent higher in Britain than in Spain, and a Fiat Bravo 49.5 per cent higher than in Ireland. The consumer affairs minister, Kim Howells, last night welcomed the DTI committee report: "I am particularly interested in those proposals that would enable UK car buyers to access lower prices."

The European Commission is to review in 2002 the so-called block exemption that allows manufacturers and dealers to stich up the British market and the DTI is almost certain to recommend its demise. The select committee also urged the Office of Fair Trading to get tough with "cartel-like corporations" if they were found guilty of grossly anti-competitive be-

haviour. The report concluded: "Fleet car buyers get the best deals, leaving private buyers to pay higher prices."

There was "general dissatisfaction" with garage servicing and there was no evidence that franchised dealers provide better customer service.

Manufacturers "squeeze" dealer margins and thus have dominant power over prices. Currency fluctuations alone cannot account for the price differences.

But the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders said: "The fundamental reason that car prices have appeared to be higher is the 30 per cent fluctuations in the value of sterling. The committee received no real evidence to support any other view."

Alan Pulham, of the Retail Motor Industry Federation, said the report endorsed the federation's view that dealer margins had been reduced to a point where dealers could have little impact on prices.

Stella MacKinnon, director of the Consumers' Association, said: "The report today shows that we are right - car manufacturers are rigging the market and ripping off UK consumers. The Government must now act immediately on the committee's recommendations and ensure fair play for UK consumers."

Mafia link to theft of ancient treasures

John Hooper in Rome

A SELF-STYLED prince with his own castle. Tens of thousands of allegedly looted antiquities. An audacious escape down a hidden tunnel. And, in the background, the ominous shadow of the Sicilian Mafia.

It could be the plot for an Indiana Jones re-make. But raids in different parts of Sicily this week have prompted prosecutors to investigate whether there is a direct link between Cosa Nostra and the clandestine trade draining Sicily of its archaeological treasures.

A prosecutor and a judge in the city of Catania were due to interrogate yesterday the last of six people arrested earlier this week and charged with conspiracy and handling or receiving stolen goods. The police recovered 10,000 archaeological pieces worth \$40 million from the suspects' homes.

Like the others, Giacomo Mangano, aged 71, was considered a pillar of society. He is a lecturer in ancient history at the University of Catania. His alleged accomplices include a geography professor at the same university, two businessmen, and a coin dealer, Gianfranco Casolari, who was arrested in Rimini on the Adriatic coast.

But the man identified by investigators as the organiser of the alleged ring — and the only one of the six also charged with Mafia links — is Vincenzo Cammarata.

Mr Cammarata, aged 50, is among the island's most highly respected connoisseurs of ancient art. Last year he was asked by Catania city council to prepare an exhibition of classical jewellery at the city's archaeological museum. He did such a good job, contributing a number of items from his private collection, that the show was taken on tour to other parts of Italy.

A graduate of Catania University, married to the governor of the prison at Enna, Mr Cammarata is an influential figure in local society. Though not a "prince" or "baron", he is frequently referred to as one. And he does own a castle.

His precise role in the antiquities business has been for some time a subject of interest to law enforcement officers. On hearing of his arrest, General Roberto Conforti, the commander of the carabinieri's "heritage protection squad", said: "Vincenzo Cammarata is an old acquaintance of ours".

However, he added, that a

previous search of the "prince's" house had found only objects that had been legally acquired.

He had already been charged with receiving stolen goods in a case of international significance — a wrangle between Italy and the United States over a solid gold plate from the Hellenic era which finished up in New York after being found in the Sicilian countryside.

Even so, the investigators were unprepared for what they found when they called at Mr Cammarata's house in Enna. There were ancient vases, bronze coins and lavish crowns displayed throughout the house. Police even found antiquities in one of the lavatories.

"It's unbelievable," said Maria Grazia Branciforte, a

'It's quite unbelievable. There are probably more exhibits to be found in that house than there are in some museums'

government heritage official, after watching a video of the police raid. "I have seen pieces of incalculable value. There are more exhibits in that house than in some museums."

Two-thirds of all art thefts in Italy are of archaeological finds, which are the property of the state. In 1997, 14,737 items were reported missing. It is reckoned that more than \$150 million worth of art is exported illegally from Italy each year. The highest single category is estimated to be made up of archaeological discoveries made in illegal digs.



Women in Gaza demand the release of Palestinian prisoners from Israeli jails

PHOTOGRAPH: AHMED JADALLAH

Israel pushes Wye deal to brink

David Sharrock in Jerusalem

ISRAEL signalled yesterday that it would not hand over more land to the Palestinians next week, even though President Bill Clinton, who brokered the Wye deal that relaunched the peace process in October, is due here at the weekend.

Mr Clinton's special

envoy, Dennis Ross, was meeting Ehud Barak, Netanyahu last night, as political analysts agreed that the embattled Israeli prime minister was moving further to the right in a desperate attempt to hold his coalition government together.

Mr Netanyahu has to reorganise his forces before a no confidence motion in a fortnight's time.

Under the Wye agreement, Israel must hand over another 5 per cent of the occupied West Bank to the Palestinians on December 18, although it will retain control of security. But Mr Netanyahu has imposed a new condition, demanding that the Palestinian Authority president, Yasser Arafat, must renounce plans to declare statehood in May and soft-

en his stance on the release of Palestinian prisoners held in Israeli jails.

"At this point it doesn't look like the Palestinians are changing the direction of their activities to enable us to withdraw next week," said Mr Netanyahu's adviser David Bar-Ilan.

Fresh clashes broke out in the West Bank yesterday, following the shooting on Monday of a cousin of the Palestinian chief negotiator, Saeb Erekat, by Israeli soldiers firing baton rounds.

Mr Erekat said 20-year-old Nasser Erekat, who is on a life-support system, had been declared "clinically dead".

Tamil Tiger gains put army leader under fire

Susannah Price in Colombo on a general's fight for his political life

THE last few days have been miserable for Sri Lanka's deputy defence minister and four-star general Anuruddha Ratwatte, who is directing day to day operations against the Tamil Tiger separatists.

On Friday, it was announced that a major military offensive which he has spearheaded since May 1996 was to end prematurely. Two days later, the rebels almost managed to kill him with a mortar shell. Gen Ratwatte, known for his love of uniforms and other military trappings, remained upbeat in spite of his troubles.

"We will come back," he told reporters shortly after fleeing the mortar attack on the town of Oddusudan, 162 miles north of Colombo, which has just been taken by the army.

The minister, who leapt through various ranks to his current position, is no stranger to near misses — two years ago his helicopter went down in a rebel-held area after running out of fuel. But this time he may have to fight for his political survival.

His niece, President Chandrika Kumaratunga, who is also the defence minister, is reported to be taking the initiative in the 15-year-old war and has made some major changes. One of the first was to end Operation Jaya Sikuru (Victory Assured) which Gen Ratwatte launched in May 1996. Its objective was to take control of 47 miles of road leading through Tamil Tiger-held territory to the government-held Jaffna peninsula.

"The whole operation was a complete nightmare," said defence expert Iqbal Athas. "Not only did it involve capturing the whole road through the Tiger area but also holding on to it. They needed a face-saving way to cancel it."

The offensive had appeared doomed since September, when the Tigers captured the strategically important town of Kilinochchi, the last major settlement on the road before Jaffna. More than a thousand soldiers died in that attack. By the time the operation was cancelled, the army had taken about two-thirds of the road but more than three thousand soldiers had been killed in the process.

"The whole offensive was going nowhere for a long time," said the former chief of the air force, Air Vice-Marshal Harry Gunatilleke. "The army has a serious manpower problem — they need to recruit 20,000 men and they just can't do it."

The end of the campaign was announced in a press release which said simply that

Operation Jaya Sikuru had ended and a new operation, codenamed Rivi Bela (Sun Power), had been launched. There was no further explanation and no suggestion of defeat.

The Rivi Bela offensive has led to the capture of land in the east towards one of the Tigers' main bases and Gen Ratwatte, always highly visible in the local media, could hardly wait to visit the newly captured town of Oddusudan with the three commanders of the armed services.

As the general emerged from a Hindu temple where he had been talking to Tamil civilians, the Tigers launched their mortar attack. He was unhurt but four soldiers were killed and more than forty injured.

"There was bodies and blood everywhere — it looked really bad — the soldiers and the top brass were obviously shaken," said one reporter who visited the nearby town of Nedumkerni, where the casualties were taken.

Analysts believe the army may now try to push further

'If they try to box in the Tigers it would be like trying to corner a wildcat in a small room'

eastwards towards the coast following the Tigers' strategic withdrawal from Oddusudan. But it is feared that the guerrillas may have lured government forces into a false sense of security. "If they try to box in the Tigers by moving east it would be like trying to corner a wildcat in a small room," said Iqbal Athas. "It will soon turn eventually and it could get very nasty."

Civilian groups in Colombo are continuing initiatives to bring the political parties together to agree on a common framework for peace. But they cannot have been encouraged by the reaction of the foreign minister, Lakshman Kadirgamar, to suggestions by the leader of the Tamil Tigers — or Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam — that there should be an initial dialogue. "If you ask me not to waste my time in trying to fight the LTTE as best I can, I refuse that completely," Mr Kadirgamar told parliament. "I am going to spend time on trying my best to contain this group as much as possible before we talk."

For now at least, it seems it is the military rather than the political solution that is occupying politicians.

Protests shroud wider acceptance of Pinochet trial

A RUMOUR doing the rounds in Vina del Mar, the Chilean elite's favourite Pacific watering-place, is that Jack Straw visited the town in his youth and spent his nights planting bombs for the local left. Graffiti around the town reads: "Build the fatherland — kill a Briton".

That is the measure of the hysteria that has gripped part of Chile's rightwing since the "kidnapping" of the former dictator, General Augusto Pinochet two months ago.

Television viewers will have seen aspects of this: flag-burnings outside the British and Spanish ambassadors' residences, fascist salutes, posters exhorting the "immortal" Pinochet.

With such images have come warnings that Chile's fledgling democracy is on the edge of chaos. This impression has been cultivated by politicians hoping to persuade the Home Secretary to refuse General Pinochet's extradition to Spain. It is not for the world to send such a tidal wave through Chile's return to democracy, they argue.

Yet Chile's democracy can look after itself. It has its problems — not least that General Pinochet insisted on keeping a key role for himself as a condition for letting the transition go ahead — but it will survive.

The Spanish community here has reported attacks, one causing broken bones. A few weeks ago, acid was poured on a car outside a British human rights worker's house. But the incidents of protests have been very few and the numbers of those involved small.

The true picture was given by a MORI poll last week. It showed that 63 per cent of Chileans believe General Pinochet is guilty,

16 per cent think he is innocent and 57 per cent want him tried if he comes back. Five per cent said they were saddened by his arrest, 2 per cent were angered and 7 per cent were "happy".

The army is humiliated and furious, but its commanders appear to be looking to the future. They know that any coup attempt, or serious sabre-rattling, would cause an international outcry.

President Eduardo Frei's centre-left government, like the right, has some passion that the country's sovereignty is at stake. But the Chilean constitution says sovereignty is subordinate to human rights considerations. Chile also signed the 1984 Torture Convention and is thus obliged to accept international jurisdiction in such a case.

Politically, of course, the government could say little else. But some Chileans know that, by treaty, the international community has a prior duty in cases of crimes against humanity: to ensure, when individual states are incapable of it, that justice is done.

It is on this point that the political atmosphere here is shifting. Hitherto, the Socialists were the only party in Mr Frei's coalition to support General Pinochet's extradition to Spain. Now they argue that it is up to Chile to remove the mechanisms which protect him and prove to the world that he can be tried here.

The right, meanwhile, appears now to believe that General Pinochet should accept his fate, projecting himself as a great leader sacrificing himself for his nation. With presidential elections in a year's time, such a scenario suits his supporters far more than having him at home.



The funeral of Haitians killed in anti-Duvalier rioting after Baby Doc fled the country in 1986. He later took refuge in France, but rights activists want to see him tried for crimes against humanity

PHOTOGRAPH: GILES PERESSMANIAN

Haiti exiles seek trial of 'Baby Doc'

Jon Henley in Paris

HAITIAN exiles and French human rights activists have formed an association to demand the trial for crimes against humanity of the former Haitian dictator Jean-Claude "Baby Doc" Duvalier, who has lived in France since 1986 but whose whereabouts are currently unknown.

"It is our duty in memory of the 50,000 victims of his and his father's regimes, to ensure that Jean-Claude Duvalier is judged," said the Haitian-born poet Gerald Bloncourt, a co-founder of the association, which was formed this weekend.

The French interior ministry said it had lost all track of Mr Duvalier, and that he could have left France. The former president's lawyer in Paris, Souveur Vasse, said he believed Mr Duvalier was still in the country, but he had "no idea where he is".

Baby Doc Duvalier, now aged 47, came to power in Haiti in 1971 after the death of his father, "Papa Doc". He fled

the island in February 1986 after several weeks of rioting by a population brutalised by the father-and-son dynasty and its feared private militia, the Tontons Macoutes. Tens of thousands of people were massacred or tortured during the family's 31-year rule.

Mr Duvalier was allowed into France but he was refused political refugee status and has not been issued with a residence permit.

A spokesman for the foreign ministry said Mr Duvalier had been granted "territorial asylum", a discretionary status allowing the French government to "welcome whoever it wants on to French territory".

Mr Duvalier settled at first on the Cote d'Azur, moving house several times between the towns of Grasse, Vallauris and Mougins, but moved to Paris when he ran into financial difficulties in 1992.

Mr Bloncourt said France was still protecting the former dictator. "The authorities claim not to know where he is, but in reality he comes and goes as he chooses," he said.

News in brief

Clashes flare in Angola

ANGOLAN forces have clashed with the rebel group Unita in heavy fighting near the strategic town of Cuito, it was reported yesterday.

The South African Institute for Security Studies said the fighting had forced President Eduardo dos Santos to withdraw troops from Congo, where they are backing Laurent Kabila's regime in a civil war.

The rebels said they seized significant territory outside Cuito in central Angola after government war planes had bombed Unita strongholds at the weekend. — Reuters, Johannesburg.

35 bodies in orchard

ALGERIAN authorities have discovered 35 bodies in an orchard on the outskirts of Algiers and suspect they were killed by Islamic militants. The El Watan newspaper said the bodies were found in a disused well. It is feared the number of victims could rise to 200. — Paris, AP.

Victory for Iranian press

PAEZZEH Hashemi, a leading moderate Iranian newspaper publisher and daughter of former president Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, has been acquitted of almost all charges of libelling the police.

Ms Hashemi's daily, one of those under pressure from hardliners opposed to the government's liberal reforms, had accused a top security official of being near by when two members of the cabinet were beaten up. — Reuters, Tehran.

society

Every Wednesday in the

The Guardian

سازمان اطلاعات

Comment

Diary

Matthew Norman

ALATE contender for Press Release of the Year comes from, of all people, the Bible Society. The document announces a novel plan to spread the Lord's Word across the planet: the society is to print 3,000 Bibles in the Philippines on paper recycled from pornographic magazines confiscated there. The recycling firm's manager, a Mr Chua, explains sagely that the use of the porn mags "is very consistent with the Lord Jesus Christ... We are able to leave a stain or two from those examples... How very true. Although the society will be taking care to avoid slip-ups in the pulping process leading to unfortunate juxtapositions ("And verily did Jesus say unto him") "Oh yes, big boy, yessss... that sort of thing). It is not known at this stage how closely it intends to match the mags to the segments of the New Testament they will become... using recycled pages from Foot Fetish Monthly, for example, for Christ's washing of disciples' feet. Diary Vicar the Rev Steve Chalke has been apprised of this news, and will deliver his verdict tomorrow.

IAM intrigued by a piece in the Glasgow Herald about piracy in the South China Seas by Ian Bruce... or rather not by the piece, in fact, but the byline. Mr Bruce, recently the defence correspondent, has suddenly mutated into the Herald's geopolitical editor. An exotic title is a splendid thing (especially in lieu of a decent pay rise), and to Mr Bruce we remove our geopolitical hat.

CONGRATULATIONS to Spectator editor Frank Johnson who is to wed Virginia Fraser, reports the Telegraph, before Christmas. Joyous news married only by rumours of industrial unrest at the magazine. His Brazilian ordered, Paul Johnson, it is said, is measured for a Savile Row donkey jacket. Meanwhile Taki is to organise a flying picket at the church — vowing to follow the couple on their honeymoon. A less quick solution is found. Good luck brothers.

ADAY after reporting that Mirror columnist James Whitaker, the man known to Princess Diana as "the bugle, unctuous pomegranate", has taken to drinking his own urine, we are once again mystified by that newspaper... this time over its attack on comedian Mark Thomas for interception last week of a train carrying nuclear waste to Sellafield. Mark, thunders a leader, "has really gone too far this time... the result could have been a tragedy". Two days earlier, meanwhile, the Mirror ran a piece by a reporter boasting of how "I lined up on a security scandal on Britain's nuclear trains" by walking into a BNFL compound and boarding such a train. It is true, of course, that you cannot compare the two acts. Whereas Mark broke no law with his stunt, the Mirror committed a clear act of trespass.

EQUALLY mystifying is the Sun's ever-changing attitude to homosexuality. After a bewildering sequence of U-turns on the issue, the paper appears to be reverting to type once again, this time in its football strip cartoon Striker. The current storyline concerns rumours that star goalscorer Phil is being persecuted by teammates for being gay. When in last Thursday's strip this newspaper won the exclusive interview, which we splashed on the front page, above the world Guardian there appeared the strapline "Newspaper of the Rear". Too droll. "At least it's only in the Guardian," says the team manager, seeking the silver lining. "I mean, who's likely to read it?" insolence. Still, it is pointless getting cross with a newspaper suffering so grievously from the pathological inability to make up its mind.

THE day after he was committed for trial, the Daily Mail reports that Jonathan Aitken is working hard on his memoirs. "I suspect it's going to be a book," a friend is quoted as saying, "in which he flagellates himself."



Hello Scotland, wherever you are. Welcome to the Six O'Clock News

Jonathan Freedland



THE news is making the news, in Scotland at least. Tomorrow the BBC Board of Governors meets to determine the fate of television's Six O'Clock News, deciding whether the Scots can have a new version all to themselves or whether they'll have to watch the same bulletin as the rest of the United Kingdom. It's a big decision, with implications far beyond the media. For the governors will ponder not just resources and ratings, but a much more profound question: is Scotland a separate nation or not?

The governors may be carrying an even heavier burden. For tomorrow they have a chance to show if they have cracked a riddle which has so far eluded the rest of us including the Government: where is the democratic revolution currently sweeping Britain going to end up?

The Scottish battle lines are already clear enough. Ranged on one side, the Scottish National Party, the BBC newsroom in Glasgow, the Daily Record and a clutch of jockeys, from Kirsty Wark to Sheena McDonald. On the other, the Labour Government and BBC management in London.

The first group are tired of a BBC output which, in March this year, included just three items on Scotland out of 280 and, in the past four weeks, saw the Six O'Clock News air only four items on Scottish politics — compared to six on English cricket. They argue that if newspapers like the Herald and the Scotsman can report the world through an Edinburgh/Glasgow lens without descending into hagiography or parochialism, then so

could a Scottish Six. Labour worries that such a programme would become an automatic platform for the SNP (Gossip London Beeb types rubbish their Glasgow colleagues as a bunch of crypto-nationalists). Publicly BBC management is "agnostic", promising they could provide a news service for Scotland just as they do for the World Service or Ceefax.

Privately, they admit they're against the Balkanisation of the BBC and that a Scottish Six is more about separatism than devolution. Since the Scots themselves have not yet voted to be an independent nation, why should the BBC make the first move and treat them like one? That attitude is likely to prevail tomorrow: the smart money says the governors will maintain a "UK-wide Six", while demanding the programme does a better job of reflecting the entire country.

This is deep, uncharted water, and the BBC is not the only one wading, confusedly, into it. All our key public institutions — especially those that aim to be genuinely British — are struggling to work out their place in the new, looser future now under construction. In this case, the Beeb's error is a failure to appreciate the current mood in Scotland — a place with its own banks, newspapers, legal system, radio stations and (soon) parliament. Most Scots already regard themselves as having a distinct culture — hence their recent rejection of two shows from the ITV network in favour of their own programmes, and probably imagine a nightly bulletin

from Glasgow would simply complete the picture. But much more troubling than any decision by the BBC is the failure of the very authors of the current revolution to understand either its driving logic or its eventual destination. Tony Blair launches the grandest programme of decentralisation this century, devolving power to Edinburgh, Cardiff and London, but then wants to hand-pick the leaders of these new bodies himself. It's as if he doesn't understand the very project he has birthed: for the entire point of devolution is to allow these new centres to grow, and determine their own futures for themselves.

TWO pristine examples of this democratic blind-spot surfaced just yesterday. First came the leaked word of the Government's plans for reform of the House of Lords. No one yet knows what the plan will be — the chair of the royal commission has not even been chosen, though Roy Jenkins made a fairly undisguised bid for himself yesterday — but even the leak was revealing. It suggested that Labour wants only one in three members of the new House to be elected, lest the second chamber pose a threat to the supremacy of the Commons.

This is a textbook case of the current political myopia: the failure to see the logic of one's own actions. For, once again, the entire point of a second chamber in a system that professes separation of powers is to challenge the executive, which happens, in Britain, to be located in the House of Commons. That's

not a "threat" — that's a complete chamber's raise on d'tro. In other words, Labour is reforming an institution without understanding the purpose of either the reform or the institution. Later we saw John Prescott unveil his consultation paper on congestion charges, "Breaking the logjam". Under his plan, funds levied on motorists will go straight back into transport. They'll be earmarked — "hypothecated" in the jargon — so they can't be spent on anything else.

Now the life-story of this smart little idea is revealing. The Treasury opposed it, instinctively disliking anything which reduces their control over spending. Remember, the Treasury is headed by Gordon Brown — the intellectual powerhouse of this Government and the minister most able to make a coherent case for British decentralisation. Yet even he fought to defend the power of the centre.

John Prescott won that battle. But he, too, suffers from the democratic blind-spot. He is Mr Regions, an advocate of decentralised power, yet yesterday he insisted that his own Whitehall department inspect and approve every new transport scheme proposed by a local council, just to make sure they're spending their own money properly.

Don't Labour get it? Don't they realise devolution isn't devolution if London still gets the final say? Don't they see what they have started? The country is changing, thanks to them, but neither they, nor the BBC, can quite believe it — or understand it.

The Government has suffered a humiliation over the Lords

In praise of Mr Hague

Ian Aitken



TRY, if you can, to imagine a political landscape which is 180 degrees different from the one that is currently convulsing the Conservative Party. Picture a scenario in which, Tony Blair is informed minutes before question time that his leader in the House of Lords, the Baroness Jay, has been secretly brokering a deal with the Tories to buy their support for some government measure, that the terms of this deal have already been specifically ruled out by the cabinet, and that Lady Jay turns out to have made a clandestine visit to Conservative Central Office to arrange a timetable for the deal which will cause the maximum embarrassment to the prime minister.

It is not hard to imagine what would have happened then. The Baroness would not just have been sacked — her feet wouldn't have touched the ground. In addition, she would probably have been required to resign the Labour whip, and to hand in her party card at the same time. And once dismissed, it is hard to imagine anyone uttering a word in her defence. On the contrary, most people would have felt that she ought to have been boiled in oil, too.

Yet Lord Cranborne's behaviour has been exactly parallel to his imaginary melodrama. Even he was forced to admit that his secret dealings with the Government had been outrageous. Then he excused himself by saying that his loyalty was to the House of Lords rather than to the Conservative Party — a hanging offence in itself. Indeed, at that stage only he and Alastair Campbell knew just how outrageous he had behaved, since news of his cloak-and-dagger visit to Downing Street to see the Prime Minister's press secretary had not yet leaked out. (Incidentally, who did the leaking? Not Lord Cranborne, one suspects.)

SO why has there been such a brouhaha about poor Mr Hague's decision to do what any party leader would have done? Why did all those pompous peers resign in sympathy with Cranborne? Why did Fleet Street's finest ransack their copies of Roper for suitably apocalyptic words to describe Mr Hague's future? Can it be that the age of deference is not dead after all? Is everyone bowing to Cranborne because he is a Cecil, and therefore the inheritor of 400 years of doing more or less as they please?

So far as Fleet Street is concerned, I doubt if deference has much to do with it. To be sure, the banded knee still survives among journalists, but the knees are bent in the direction of Downing Street and the proprietor's office rather than Hatfield House or the House of Lords. On the whole, the harassment of Hague is taking place because the once loyal Tory press has chosen to back a political winner rather than a perceived loser. They have enjoyed the taste of his power, and now they want to see what happens next.

But what about the Tories themselves? One can understand why so many of the hereditaries are rattled on Hague — like Cranborne, their loyalty is to the House of Lords — by which they mean their own privileges. But what kind of death-wish dictates that some MPs, as well as a clutch of visually challenged Tory life peers, are now denouncing their party leader as either a clown or weakling? One could say with Enoch Powell that those whom the gods wish to destroy they first make mad, except that in this case it is

self-destruction rather than an act of the gods.

As for the Government side of the equation, one can understand their jubilation at self-congratulation. They have inflicted horrendous damage on the Conservatives simply by playing on the gullibility of the supposedly witty Lord Cranborne. Like Pook and Piglet, young Cecil dug the befalling trap with his own hand, and then not only fell into it himself but also dragged Piglet (in the person of Mr Hague) in with him. Labour needed to do virtually nothing.

But the uproar over the sacking of Cranborne has meant that a crucial question about Labour's share in this opera bouffe has remained largely unasked and certainly unanswered. It is: why did the Government decide to go for the compromise deal after all, after promising unequivocal action to get rid of the hereditaries here and now? You may say that's easy — it feared the loss of large swathes of its legislative programme and this deal offered a means of saving it.

Well, yes. But let's face it — this means that, despite all the huffing and puffing, the Government really has suffered a humiliation at the hands of Mr Hague. It has backed down on a measure which was hugely popular with its own troops, even though it was still hanging the war drums and uttering blood-curdling threats right up until the moment when the whole thing blew up in its face.

Ah ha, I hear you say, the



It is quite possible that he will recover the initiative which was stolen from him by the treacherous Cranborne

drum-beating was just a smokescreen to confuse and frighten the enemy while the Cranborne deal was being brokered to secret. But if so, it involved telling a frightful lot of whoppers, not least to the press.

It may eventually turn out to have been too clever by half — a phrase which will be familiar to the Cecil family. Meanwhile, it is quite possible that Hague will manage to recover the initiative which was stolen from him by the treacherous Cranborne. He has already drawn Labour blood by announcing his intention to publish a workable plan for a partially-elected second chamber, thereby forcing Blair to speed up the preparation of his own scheme.

That development probably means that the report of the proposed royal commission will also be accelerated — no bad thing, since thinking up a policy on the House of Lords has been in Labour's pending tray ever since Kier Hardie's day. And, last but not least, the whole pantomime has now made it unimaginable that any new second chamber could ever consist wholly or even largely of prime ministerial appointees — a useful achievement.

I mourn the death of one of television's original and best investigative programmes

World Inaction

David Leigh

THE insistent theme music of World in Action died away for the last time at 8.30 pm on Monday on ITV, after a typically over-the-top assault on the hewers — complete with an alcoholic, sluttishly weeping into her beer as she contemplated baying to choose between her addictive tipples and her little daughter.

Great stuff, but now it's time gentlemen, please, because that's yer lot. The most famous investigative programme on British television was killed off after 25 years this week — to a furtive silence from Granada, the company which made it. The closing credits did not reveal there were no more programmes scheduled.

I watched that last episode with great sadness: as an investigative journalist myself, I'd felt proud to work there — treading in the footsteps of men like the legend-

ary Ray Fitzwalter, who exposed Poulson's corruption of politicians in the 1960s (having been unsuccessfully banned by the Independent Broadcasting Authority for "bringing public institutions into disrepute").

And it was George Jesse Turner, World in Action's famous cameraman who'd braved gunfire across the world, who went with me to Angola. He nearly killed himself again there, catching cerebral malaria whilst getting harrowing footage of the mutilation caused by civil-war landmines. Turner was once heard on-screen crossing the Jordan at night under fire with a group of Palestinian commandos. "I've been hit," he shouted as the camera wobbled: "Up the arse!"

And it was Ian McBride, World in Action's justly-celebrated producer who helped get the Birmingham Six out of jail, who was still there to back us unflinchingly with Granada's time, support and money while

we did our bit to put Jonathan Aitken in jail, with the programme which forced the cabinet minister to launch his ill-fated libel action.

These were inspiring people, who'd learned their moral thrust from a Manchester-based programme

which launched under Granada's visionary Sidney Bernstein (described by MBE as a Communist) in 1963. All the great names of TV had been there at World in Action at some point or other — David Plowright, John Birt, Denis Forman, Gus McDonald, Paul Greenacre was a WIA alumnus — he went on in the 1980s to be one of the few people who suc-

cessfully made a fool of Mrs Thatcher, by ghost-writing the M15 memoirs. Spy-catcher that she tried to ban. Another was Laurie Ryan, who only this year, with Michael Sean Gilmore, made the TV world totter with his revelations in the Guardian that the Carlton documentary The Connection, was a fake. That was another thing about World in Action. The people who were there didn't make fakes. It wasn't in the culture.

World in Action's half-hour investigations have now become a victim of the same process which has ousted News at 10 from its slot. Bad TV is driving out good, as the satellite and digital wastelands encroach. Granada has not been Bernstein's company for a long while — it is a light entertainment to motorway food conglomerate. The federal ITV network centre, of which Granada is a big part, is rattled by ceding audiences, and want bums back

on seats. So, at some point in the new year, a more glitzy replacement, temporarily titled 60 Minutes, will come on the air instead. It will be part-Granada, part-ITN — part news-of-the-day, part personality profile, part (perhaps) consumer investigation. It certainly won't be World in Action.

Rather than let such a distinguished series die in a corner, it would have been more honest to admit that it has been killed off, and throw a huge wake in memoriam for a programme that was one of ITV's most remarkable contributions to popular culture. Granada could certainly afford it. They got around £140,000 for each of their programmes from the ITV network, but then made it on a relative shoe-string for a budget of £20,000. Over the years, the company made millions out of this show they now don't wish to talk about.

David Leigh was a WIA producer 1983-1985

JOHN SELWYN CUMMER IS

السنة 1520

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Brave new world

... needs brave new ethics

IT WAS asked to answer one of the most challenging questions of scientific ethics ever set and it has probably got it right — though of its nature we won't truly know for many years to come. A working group of the Human Genetics Advisory Commission and Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority has recommended the Government to ban the cloning of humans, but to authorise — for very precise purposes — new research using cloning techniques into human embryos. If endorsed by the Government it could lead to a revolution allowing replacement skin, muscle, and even nerve tissue to be nurtured in the laboratory. The greatest short-term potential is in disorders like Parkinson's or Alzheimer's where brain cells are lost which could in future be treated by growing replacement nerve cells in culture and implanting them into a patient's brain.

Faced at one end of the scale with such dazzling prospects — that could enrich and prolong the lives of millions — and at the other end with the macabre prospect of cloning an entire human being, it was always going to be difficult for the committee to decide where to draw the line. It can't play God so it has played pragmatist instead. To permit the cloning of a very young embryo is permissible, but more is not. There will be those who will argue that if 14 days is OK, then why not 20 days or more, just as people debate how long a pregnancy can last before abortion is wrong. Develop-

ments will have to be watched most carefully. There are plenty of religious groups that argue it shouldn't happen at all — human life to them is indivisible. Sir Colin Campbell, chairman of the Human Genetics Advisory Commission (HGAC), says that cloning for human spare parts, already illegal, is "morally repugnant" and insists that only research likely to bring benefits will be licensed. Monitoring such research will be difficult and the penalties for breaching the rules if only by a few days will be controversial. But it is far better that pioneering research like this is governed by definite rules than that it goes ahead — as it surely will — uninhibited. The Government is wise to keep the ethics marching almost in pace with the technology.

The trouble is that the technology won't stop. The speed of biological breakthroughs since Crick and Watson unravelled the secret of DNA in 1953 has been quite astonishing. We are all composed of 100 million million cells each of them containing the blueprint to make another one of us. Tissue engineers have already grown football fields of skin — to be used to wrap around victims of burns. It may soon be possible to grow your own heart by-pass. The cure for illnesses like manic depression may emerge from genetic engineering research. At the moment we can dismiss human cloning as a serious problem. Reproduction by sexual activity is more efficient as well as more enjoyable. But as research progresses the ethical problems will be magnified. If it becomes possible in future, as well it might, to manufacture whole new organs or parts of bodies, then pressure from patients may force further changes. And if it ever becomes possible to manufacture all the constituent parts of the body, then human cloning would have happened without being planned. The stopping point is still the brain

— but in the end that may simply be the most complicated piece of the genetic Lego set that goes by the name of human being. It is difficult to make sense of a voyage of discovery when we don't know what lies at the end. If all it really takes to cure hundreds of thousands of sufferers of Parkinson's disease is an injection of nerve cells grown in a laboratory dish, then it would be a brave person who could honestly denounce that as immoral — or even unnatural.

Against torture

Openness is best for judges

IT WOULD appear, from his involvement with a charity associated with Amnesty International, that Lord Hoffmann is broadly against torture. This is good. It would be unfortunate if the highest court in the land included judges who were in favour of torture. It is even possible that Lord Hoffmann's prejudice against torture led him to take a dim view of the past activities of General Augusto Pinochet. This, too, is good. Even the Lords Slynn and Lloyd, who were in favour of the General returning to his native Chile, did not speak up for the right of heads of state to torture their citizens. So it is hard to see that Lord Hoffmann's admirable work as an unpaid director of Amnesty International Charity Ltd should have had any bearing on his judgment in the recent extradition appeal heard by the Law Lords. It is true that Amnesty International made representations to the judges hearing the case: it would undoubtedly have been better if Lord Hoffmann had at that stage made a public declaration of his links with the organisation. But it is a fairly desperate gambit for the supporters of Pinochet to suggest that

the verdict of the Lords is in some sense unsound as a result of the non-declaration. As a letter elsewhere on this page makes plain, Lord Hoffmann's support of Amnesty International's work did not prevent him from siding with the majority in a judgment last month which effectively sent a convicted murderer to the gallows.

But the row over Lord Hoffmann's conflict — or coincidence of interests does highlight once again the nature of the conceit that our most senior judges are neutral agents. Of course they are not. They are living, sentient human beings with fully-developed political, cultural and moral opinions of their own. With the incorporation of the European Convention on Human Rights senior judges will have a powerful and creative role in developing the law on everything from planning disputes to privacy. It is inevitable that the public will grow more curious about the political opinions and personal views of the men and women handing down these decisions. That, in turn, will lead to a demand for a more open system of scrutiny of judicial appointments — much in line with Labour's pre-Government proposal of a judicial appointments committee. Lord Hoffmann's laudable interest in human rights was no reason for him to have recused himself in the Pinochet case. But it is better, if only to prevent mischief, for these things to be out in the open.

Marriage a la mode

Dress now, repent later

TO the Neapolitan newly-weds Sabrina Battaglia and Anello Formisano, we offer our best wishes and a note of caution. In her silk cuffs and feather ruff Battaglia walked down the aisle and into the Guinness Book of

Records on Monday in the most expensive wedding dress in history — a £3 million outfit encrusted with 7,000 diamonds, designed by Gianni Molino and protected by 20 security guards. Neither sibling pieces of the veil for charity, nor donating £30,000 worth of diamonds to children in Naples with Aids could prevent the archbishop of Naples' spokesperson describing the event as a piece of undignified exhibitionism.

But it is in the spirit of post-nuptial counselling rather than class-envy that we ask the couple to heed the lessons of recent marital history. Formisano may truly believe that "Sabrina is the most precious person in the world," and want "a dress worthy of her." But the track record for blushing brides in flashy frocks is not encouraging. In fact the price of a wedding dress seems to be inversely proportional to the success of the marriage it was bought to celebrate.

Princess Diana's ivory silk gown, crafted by the Emmanuels, was a relatively modest £1,050 in 1981. Sheryl Gascoigne's hand-beaded lace meringue set her back a measly £10,000 two years ago. And Victoria Beckham's budget could stretch no further than £16,000 when she married Earl Spencer.

Each one a snip compared to Battaglia's sparkling performance, but each telling essentially the same story. When the wedding march is played to the excessive ringing of cash tills the outcome is all too often not a happy, life-long union but an unseemly battle for custody and alimony.

The second most memorable aspect of every one of these relationships was the glamorous gowns that made it to the altar. But the thing that remains foremost in our minds is not so much the earnestness with which the couples took their marital vows but the messiness with which they conducted their separation.

Letters to the Editor

Polygamy and The Simpsons

JULIE Flint (Letters, December 7) claims a "misreading" in my assertion that four-wife polygamists live in Kurdish districts of Turkey. Turkey. Overlaid by Nicole and Hugh Pope, journalists, respectively, for Le Monde and the Wall Street Journal, states: "South-eastern areas have by far the highest incidence of Islamic polygamy. The current record-holder, Kord, with a full complement of four wives, now has more than 40 children." I saw this a month ago, when I visited the south-east. Fred Norman Stone, London.

GEORGE Soros thinks the world is "still in a bear market" (Prodigious returns, December 8). Surely a market where one man's comments has the world panic-selling currencies is a sheep market? Nick Miners, London.

IN your Passnotes on The Simpsons (December 8) you say there is no noticeable intelligent life in Springfield. This is an outrageous slur. Apart from the multi-faceted Lisa Simpson, Baby Maggie (age 1) can spell out E-M-C² with her toy blocks. Paul Jeremy, Brighton.

WHY can't we spread the burden for the toy industry as we have for car manufacturers and have Christmas twice a year? Martin Earl, London.

AS a Kiwi living in Europe, your anglicising of "Marlboro" (Comment, December 7) conjured up a posse of "Marlborough" cowboys dressed in blue shirts and brandishing well-oiled Chardonnays which was pure nostalgia. Neil Cockburn, Stuttgart, Germany.

No amnesty for Hoffmann

YOUR revelation of Lord Hoffmann's involvement in promoting human rights comes as no surprise to the legal community. Equally well known, however, is his judicial integrity in the sense that he does not allow his personal views to intrude into his judgments.

In Trevor Pennerman Fisher v Bahamas, Hoffmann was recently sitting in the Privy Council when, in an important test case, this appeal was dismissed. The case was about the death penalty and was decided by three to two. Hoffmann was with the majority. Amnesty is against the death penalty in all circumstances and the decision would have gone the other way if Hoffmann had voted to allow the appeal. The fact is that Hoffmann was on the panel of judges for Pinochet by accident: originally it was to have a different appeal, but Pinochet edged it out of the way. He gave no separate opinion, but agreed with the judgments of two other judges. In this light, the only story worth reporting is that Pinochet's spin doctors have resorted to attacking a messenger rather than attempting to demonstrate any legal fault in the cohesive and comprehensive legal analysis

relating to his supposed humanity. It would indeed be cause for criticism for a judge to allow his personal views to influence his legal decisions. But it would also be a sad day if judges were prevented from carrying out a role in legal education and the advancement of human rights. In case I am accused of partisanship, I was counsel for Amnesty in the Lords in Pinochet. I was also counsel for poor Trevor Pennerman Fisher, who has since been hanged. Andrew Davies, London.

THE demands of justice and the requirements of the rule of law regularly clash in the most frustrating ways. In any judicial system worthy of respect, judges must not only be impartial but be above suspicion of partiality. Even in the case of notorious figures, it sets justice on a slippery slope when slapdash attitudes to conflict of interest by a judge are overlooked because of the unpopularity of the person in the dock.

Amnesty International shot itself in the foot when it insisted on joining the appeal against the High Court's finding in favour of Augusto Pinochet while overlooking its ex-

tensive links with Lord Justice Hoffmann. Litigation is growing in Britain. With the de facto introduction of a written constitution, the role of judges in determining our rights instead of Parliament will grow ever greater. It is essential that the judiciary is independent of all pressures, even Amnesty. Imagine how the distinguished solicitor, Geoffrey Bindman, who acted for Amnesty in the Pinochet appeal, would have reacted to the discovery that a law lord's wife worked for the tobacco company partly funding Pinochet's defence while the law lord himself was an unpaid director of a related company. Mark Almond, Oriel College, Oxford.

HAVE just returned from Mexico and Costa Rica. Image after image of Jack Straw accompanied me on my travels. In every paper, on every television. The whole of Latin America is looking to the previously unknown "Yack Estraw" for justice. Does he really want to be remembered as the man who let Pinochet off? Dr Deborah Shaw, Southsea, Hants.



Bad prognosis for doctors' apology

AS SOMEONE who had apologies from the doctors (Apologies for mistakes, doctors told, December 7) who twice told me there was nothing in the oedipal blips of a breast lump while writing in the notes that they didn't know whether there was or not because they hadn't taken enough tissue, I can say that an apology doesn't actually make one feel better.

In fact, it increased my unease as I then thought their treatment of me was standard. I have since discovered I was right except now (a year after I told them I was suing them for not telling me the truth and taking a risk with my life) they tell patients they didn't extract enough tissue "but, I'm almost sure, there's nothing there". This then puts the

onus on an already anxious person to insist on further samples being taken. I suppose this is a step forward, if I'd had that chance I would not have walked out of the hospital with a cancer that was then left to spread. When the doctor who apologised for not spotting the cancer on a mammogram followed her apology with "trust me to make a mistake with someone like you" (a vociferous and educated woman who thinks doctoring is a job and not something that confers divine rights) I realised that apologies were part of some new system for reducing the likelihood of litigation. Even more than an apology, the knowledge that standards were improved because of it might help. Name and address supplied.

Donor fatigue

MR Willson's enthusiasm for giving blood is heart-warming (Letters, December 7). However, the reason why we cannot accept his donation at the age of 70 is based on expert medical advice: giving blood after this age is more likely to have a detrimental effect on a donor's health. The last thing we would want to do

is risk the health of our generous donors. We appreciate it is often disconcerting for fit and healthy blood donors like Mr Willson to have to give it up.

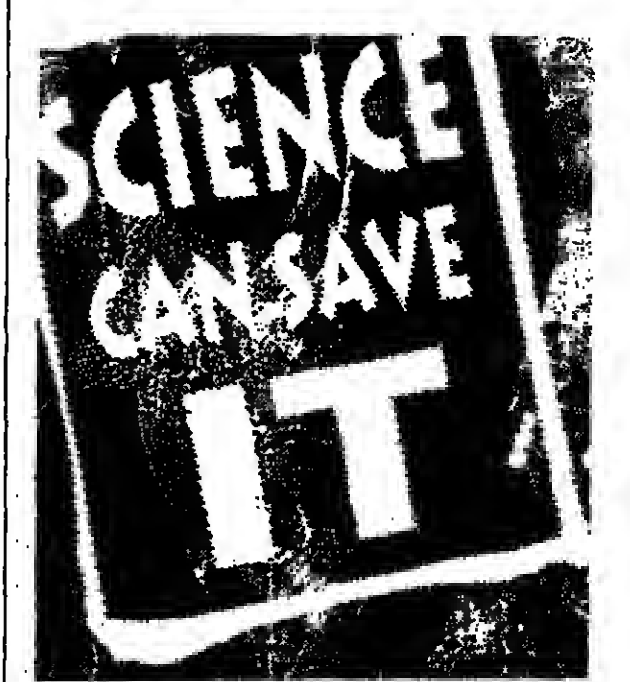
However, I do hope he, and other people, will understand that it has nothing to do with age discrimination. Mike Fogden, Chairman, National Blood Authority.

Clare Short's poor message to the wretched of the Earth

VIEWSERS of Jonathan Dimbleby's interview with Clare Short (Volcanic short leaves Downing St, December 8) on the anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights must be astonished that the Tory tabloids chose to highlight virtually her only vaguely progressive remark — whilst the rest of the interview, littered with the most amazingly reactionary remarks, has been ignored.

When challenged about the Government's failure to vote for the UN resolution condemning human rights violations in China, Ms Short called such resolutions "old-fashioned" politics and economic action against regimes with an appalling rights record also "old-fashioned". Because the "globalisation", trade is dominated by multinational companies so governments have no power. She argued that her emphasis on social and economic rights for poor people in China,

highlighted an oft-neglected area of human rights. In fact, apologists for Stalinism have long argued that gains for the poor justified the loss of "bourgeois" political rights, believing, falsely, that a trade-off between the two existed. Ms Short damned with faint praise the efforts of the Jubilee 2000 campaign calling for debt relief for the poorest countries by arguing that debt relief was not sufficient to relieve poverty (who ever argued it was?). She repeatedly denied Dimbleby's assertion that IMF/World Bank programmes involved increased health charges in Zimbabwe. She is just wrong. World Bank programmes in Sub-Saharan Africa favour charges for health and education services both as a contribution to fiscal tightening and also to improve incentives amongst recipients. Will someone tell me: what is the point of Clare Short? Dr John Wells, Cambridge.



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Hopelessly hip

Mark Steel



IMAGINE being in such a state that people were seriously discussing whether the answer was Ann Widdecombe. Simon Hoffer, in the Daily Mail, claims she's the new darling of the Tory party, the argument being that she frightens the Labour front bench. Of course she does. That's because she's bloody frightening. Some say it's her appearance, but once you've

stormed out of the Anglican Church because it was too feminist, and your claim to fame is existing a pregnant woman he managed through-out her labour, you're going to come over a tad icy even if you look like Liz Hurley.

If they just want someone frightening, why not elect a wine from Kings Cross station? Fill him up with Tanqueris Extra before Question Time and he'd be highly effective. "I'll tell you about New Labour. Come here, come here. Wadavoo know bout educashoo, John Prescott, you fat bastard!"

Tories understand neither the scale of their problem, nor the reasons behind it. For example Bruce Anderson of the Spectator wrote that Tory divisions have taken place because, in the seventies, "large numbers of intellectuals joined the Tory party and, in politics, intellectuals always cause trouble". That must be it. So the Spectator will soon

be displaying adverts that read "Are you thick? Then we want to hear from you."

Take the privatisation of the railways. That would have been hugely popular if only the Tory arguments had been less intellectual, and more along the lines of "And we're Conner South Central/Connex South Central plc/We've by far the richest board/The world has ever seen".

Hague himself has tried the approach of packaging the party as young, hip and happening. But the ideas they stand for tend to make this tricky. You don't hear teenagers on buses saying "Respect them hereditary peer dudes man, I'm tellin ya them New Labour only dis them out of jealousy man, 'cos peers go shooting grouse large style!"

Desperately they call out random crackpot explanations for their predicament, in the way that someone who's hopeless at mechanics

stands in front of a smoking car engine saying "Is there enough oil in the radiator?"

THE Name veers from politics to the leader, and as with Major, Hague's protection is that there's no one to take his place. When Peter Lilley or Michael Howard appear on TV, you get the same feeling as when someone like Ted Rogers, or the bloke who played Mr Hunter in Crossroads pop up on a cable TV game show. We all think "Oh that's wotsname, I didn't think he was still going."

Hague's mess over the Lords is typical. His dilemma isn't just that he made a tactical howler, but that only 27 per cent of the population agree with maintaining the peerage. Big business is more unpopular than at any time since the war, and over 60 per cent, the highest figure for 50 years, see themselves as working-class. Maybe Hague

will start asking questions like "Does the Prime Minister agree that Shepherd's Boy in the 3.15 at Newmarket's a sell at 8-1?" It would make no difference, because however they try to reinvent themselves, in most people's eyes they stand for the system which has just awarded executives of the top 50 British companies an average bonus of £1.7 million.

This matters more than divisions. The first Thatcher government was riddled with dissent. Hague's Tories are not unpopular because they're divided. They're divided because they're unpopular. And their most recognisable figures would take them even further down the road which made them that way.

But here's the danger for New Labour. The Tories are despised for standing for privilege, but New Labour is being coming distrustful for not opposing it. Which makes the lament from parts of the left that we need an effective oppo-

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FinanceGuardian

Zeneca ready to join forces with Swedish rival Astra in £40 billion deal

Drugs groups to merge

Mark Milner, Julia Finch and Nicholas Barnister

ZENECA, the pharmaceutical group, last night revealed that it is on the threshold of a £40 billion merger with its Swedish rival Astra, maker of the world's highest-selling prescription drug.

If the deal goes ahead it will mark another significant move in the consolidation of the world's previously fragmented drugs industry. Earlier this month, Germany's Hoechst and France's Rhône-Poulenc revealed they were merging their life sciences business and Sanofi said it was buying Synthelabo.

Other mergers have pro-

duced GlaxoWellcome, Novartis and Pharmacia Upjohn. However, consolidation within the industry has not been without its failures. Plans to merge GlaxoWellcome with SmithKline Beecham and Monsanto with American Home Products have fallen by the wayside.

Rumours of a possible tie-up between the British-based Zeneca — which was spun off from ICI in 1993 — and Astra, which makes the top-selling anti-ulcer drug, Losec, have been circulating for some time.

Last night the two companies said they were engaged in "advanced discussions regarding a possible combination — in a merger of equals".

Speculation about Zeneca's

future intensified last month after the group put its speciality chemicals business up for sale. Some analysts suggested that the move was designed to boost group margins and create a more tightly focused pharmaceuticals business.

Zeneca is Britain's third largest drugs group behind GlaxoWellcome and SmithKline Beecham. Its most important drugs include a portfolio of anti-cancer treatments, including Zoladex for prostate cancer and Tamoxifen, a 20-year-old drug used to treat breast cancer which was given a new lease of life this year after winning approval in the United States as the world's first preventative cancer medicine.

It also has a range of heart

drugs and a migraine treatment, Zomig.

In addition to Losec, Astra's top sellers include the anti-asthma inhaler Pulmicort and the beta-blocker Salagen. Its main markets are in the US, where it has a recently re-structured deal with Merck to market Losec, and Germany. It also has sales of around £400 million in the UK.

Last year, Astra's total sales amounted to around £4.5 billion while Zeneca's turnover totalled £5.1 billion. Astra, which was founded in 1913, is headed by its president and chief executive Håkan Mogren and operates in 45 countries with more than 24,000 employees. It also has an astonishing 244,000 shareholders worldwide, though the

powerful Swedish Wallenberg industrial dynasty controls 12 per cent of the company in recent comments Astra has made it clear that it has been seeking to expand its global reach by battling for the top spot in its chosen therapeutic areas.

Since Zeneca was demerged from ICI it has eclipsed its former parent. It has 31,000 employees with 40 per cent in the UK. The company has been built by its chief executive Sir David Barnes, who is now 62. Earlier this year, Zeneca announced that Sir David would take over as chairman next May and be succeeded by Dr Tom McKillop, the head of the pharmaceuticals arm.

Last year Sir David earned a salary of £845,000 but has

shares and options worth an estimated £7 million.

Jan Smith, drugs analyst at Lehman Brothers, said: "We don't have enough detail yet or know if it will happen. When Håkan Mogren spoke earlier this year on consolidation in the industry he mentioned three companies — Zeneca, Schering-Plough and Bayer. So Zeneca is hardly a surprise. Astra is strong in gastro-intestinal and respiratory. Zeneca is strong in cardiovascular, cancer and anaesthetics."

"To compete with the Mercks and Glaxos and Pfizer of the world, they have got to get bigger," Hemant Shah, an independent drug industry analyst, told the Bloomberg news agency.

Notebook

Threat to R&D the main drawback



Edited by Alex Brummer

ONE of the longest running speculations on the London stock market has been a bid for Zeneca, the pharmaceutical group spun off from ICI in 1993. Having spent the past five years denying that it is in merger talks, the company last night confirmed to the New York Stock Exchange that it is discussing an alliance with the Swedish firm Astra. The announcement came after a day of heavy trading in London which saw Zeneca's shares surge 4 per cent to 203p.

A merger of Zeneca-Astra would create a £40 billion plus trans-European pharmaceutical group from two of the better-run, but second ranking, European pharmaceutical firms. It follows widespread consolidation in the European industry which has seen the creation of a series of alliances: Novartis in Switzerland; Pharmacia Upjohn; Hoechst-Rhône Poulenc and Sanofi Synthelabo.

An alliance between Zeneca and Astra would bring together two companies with world-class drug pipelines. One of Zeneca's biggest prospects is Tamoxifen, an established breast cancer drug, which has recently won approval from the US authorities as the first preventative treatment.

Astra's biggest seller by far is Losec, an ulcer drug with similar properties to the Glaxo blockbuster Zantac.

Among the advantages of an alliance is the focus of both companies on anti-cancer drugs; the possibility of pooling distribution arrangements and costs in the critical US marketplace and an opportunity to pool research and development costs — which are escalating dramatically. It was the possibility of pooling these costs that in January almost tempted Glaxo into a merger with SmithKline Beecham.

A key concern for the UK about a Zeneca-Astra merger would be the potential loss of research facilities in one of the UK's leading-edge industries. Downing Street was known to be concerned about the brain drain of research jobs and expertise at the time of the prospective Glaxo deal. As has been seen in other recent merger proposals the other serious obstacle will be the share out of top jobs.

leged analysts and shareholders, it has become even more critical in ensuring a level playing field.

Given the relatively simple nature of the task and concerns about Year 2000 problems in its existing system, the Stock Exchange decided in its wisdom to put the task of running the RNS out to tender. Not an unreasonable course given its own systems problems in the past and the technical difficulties which have been associated with its new quote driven order system, SETs — which is still settling down.

Five, except the service provided by the outside contractor B3, was allegedly not up to snuff. As a result one of the London Stock Exchange's most important market functions — keeping traders informed — has been close to failure. This is not Taurus in terms of costs; but a great deal of egg on the face of Gavin Casey and his team as they prepare for the new complexities of the euro-era.

Disunited

THE kind of message that pops up on RNS, if not routinely, is that which has just emerged from Newcastle United, where the disgraced director Douglas Hall and Freddy Shepherd have forced their way back onto the board. The corporate governance processes have worked correctly in that the chairman and the two non-executive directors — there to protect the interests of all shareholders (not just the 64 per cent of stock controlled by the disgraced pair) — voted against their return and resigned. In the process they have taken the company's investment banking advisers, BT Alex Brown with them.

Denis Cassidy, the chairman, and the other two non-executives, John Josephs and Tom Fenton, acted correctly. But that does not help the minority shareholders who must stand by and watch the share price fall, while Hall and Shepherd run the company at their will. The promises that they will appoint new non-executives are empty; few self-respecting directors of quality would serve alongside them. The authorities need to find an immediate way of reining them in. The ultimate sanction, delisting the shares, does not work because it locks in the minority which in Newcastle's case includes thousands of football enthusiasts, innocents in the world of public quoted companies. There is nevertheless a strong case for suspending the shares until such time as a satisfactory board is appointed.

In the meantime the Department of Trade and Industry, using powers vested under the Companies Act, should investigate the circumstances leading to the high-level resignations and whether or not Shepherd and Hall are fit and proper people to be running a public company.

It is increasingly clear that many clubs which scrambled to go public, should never have made the transition at all. Manchester United is the exception rather than rule, in a sector which is mainly made up of small, loss-making businesses, run by self-made entrepreneurs posing as pils.

Call to drive costs down



Tyred and emotional... The 2,000,000th Nissan car made a star entrance at the Sunderland factory during a celebration to mark the milestone. It rolled off the production line and kept on going until its journey towards the edge of the ramp was arrested.

MPs want fines for car traders who charge too much

Nicholas Barnister, Chief Business Correspondent

BITISH car buyers are being ripped off by the motor industry through unacceptably high prices and those responsible should face heavy fines or criminal penalties, an influential group of MPs said yesterday.

The House of Commons trade and industry select committee, in a damning report

on the way cars are sold in this country, urged the Office of Fair Trading to force manufacturers and dealers to reveal their business practices, using investigative powers that take effect in March 2000 under the new Competition Act.

A European Commission report in February showed that car prices in Britain were up to 60 per cent higher than in other European countries.

Martin O'Neill, the committee chairman, warned the motor industry that if it did not put its house in order voluntarily it could face tough legislation.

The committee's main findings were:

- British car buyers were paying far too much for cars.
- There was no evidence that franchised dealers provided better customer services than independent garages.

- The EC exemption allowing manufacturers to have franchised dealer networks did not benefit consumers and should not be renewed in 2002.
- Car importers were not passing on the benefits of the strong pound to car buyers through lower prices.
- There was no evidence that right-hand drive cars needed to be costlier than their left-hand drive counterparts.

The committee added: "If there is found to have been grossly anti-competitive behaviour then due consideration will have to be given as to whether criminal penalties should be available as a deterrent to such behaviour in future, and a mark of the weight of public anger."

Mr O'Neill referred to the £87 million fine imposed on Volkswagen in January

this year after it was caught preventing its authorised dealers in Italy from selling Volkswagens and Audis to foreign buyers.

"The big international organisations can take a big hit once and again," he said. But individuals within a corporation should also be penalised.

The OFT's new powers would, for the first time, require people to testify against themselves.

System alert

THE Stock Exchange regulatory news service (RNS), an essential tool in the running of a clean, reliable and transparent market, place. It ensures that all players have access to the same information at the same time, whether it be a warning about profits or a boardroom change. With the clampdown on special briefings for priv-

Corporate financiers toast record year for mergers

Julia Treanor

YESTERDAY'S announcement of a £42 billion union between the pharmaceuticals firms Zeneca and Astra caps a record year for mergers and acquisitions in Europe and the United States.

In the first 11 months of 1998, \$2,241 billion (£1,356 billion) worth of deals were clinched — smashing the \$1,373 billion record for all of last year.

Corporate financiers, who can now be assured of record bonuses, predict that the wave of activity will continue.

"Our best bet is that next year will be another record," said Gary Dugan, European equity strategist at the investment bank JP Morgan.

The boom in corporate finance activity this year defines the gloom which lingered over the markets in the late summer and early autumn, when markets tumbled and many major players pulled out.

But activity has now returned, and the figures released by JP Morgan yesterday — compiled in association with Securities Data — miss-

out some of the mega-deals that have been announced this month, such as the \$78.5 billion agreement between the oil firms Mobil and Exxon — the world's biggest merger.

Plans for the world's largest financial services company merger also announced recently when Deutsche Bank of Germany said it would buy Bankers Trust of the US for more than \$10 billion.

Klaus Diederichs, co-head of JP Morgan's global advisory

Contractor fails to deliver RNS

Dan Atkinson

PLANS to give the Stock Exchange a new version of its key information system, the Regulatory News Service (RNS), have been thrown into chaos by the contractor's alleged failure to deliver, the Guardian has learned. Hopes that the system would be up and running early next year are fading, and the Exchange is now warning over £250,000 paid for the RNS 2 network.

This is the latest in a series of technological failures at the Stock Exchange. Its SEAG automated quotations system broke down on day one of Big Bang in 1986, and in March it cancelled — at the cost of nearly £200 million — the Taurus share-settlement computer.

Informed Markets, a subsidiary of the Press Association (PA), the London-based national news agency, was awarded the contract in April and is thought to have been expected to deliver by November 30. Now it seems the Exchange will bring the work back in-house.

It is understood that In-

formed Markets is being wound down.

The exact nature of the problems with RNS 2 are not known, but it is thought that the Exchange did not believe the system matched the specifications it had demanded.

RNS is the Exchange's mechanism for disseminating price-sensitive information. An announcement on the RNS is a legal requirement for all companies wishing to make known data such as profit warnings or anything that could affect the share price.

PA is thought to have bid low in order to win the contract, which would have paid £1.6 million a year in running fees. It is thought to have hoped that RNS 2 would have given Informed Markets a springboard from which it could win profitable company information contracts. PA would not comment yesterday, but a source said: "There are differences of opinion [with the Exchange] as to what is required [from RNS 2]."

It is thought that discussions are under way as to how much of the £250,000 paid to PA ought to be returned to the

Hinchliffe on corruption charges over Facia collapse

Dan Atkinson

RETAILING whizz-kid Stephen Hinchliffe is facing 11 charges of fraud and corruption in relation to the collapse in June 1996 of his Facia high-street empire. The Serious Fraud Office has brought a single Common Law count of conspiracy to defraud against Mr Hinchliffe and Christopher Harrison, a former finance director to some Facia group companies.

Mr Hinchliffe faces 10 further charges of corruptly offering money Mr Harrison has not been charged.

A further three men, Mizrahi Bank employees John Doherty and Paul Brady and property developer Robert Leckie also face corruption charges. The total sum involved is in excess of £1 million. The four were bailed until February 26.

Facia, which expanded rapidly in the 1990s, took in household names such as Freeman Hardy Willis, Rock Shop, fashion chain Red or Dead and Contessa lingerie. It crashed with debts of £70 million.

Gamblers play it safe in crisis

Downturn and tax hits London casinos, writes Dan Atkinson

HIGH-rolling international gamblers are drawing in their horns because of the world economic crisis, with the overall turnover in London's exclusive clubs down about 10 per cent this year against booming 1997.

Some of the big Far Eastern players are trading down to cheaper casinos, and some are even starting to take more care with their money, operator London Clubs International (LCI) said yesterday.

But for LCI the big menace of the summer was not the global crisis but the surprise rise in casino tax announced by the Chancellor, Gordon Brown, in his Budget. Chief executive Alan Goodenough said LCI had managed to ride out the slump in the London gaming scene by boosting its market share. The higher tax,

however, crunched profits before tax from £13,469,000 in the 26 weeks to September 28 last year to £9,655,000 during the same period this year.

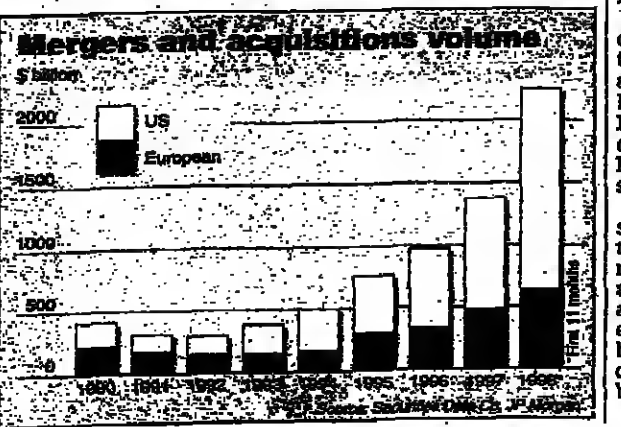
Mr Brown's tax measures lowered the floor for payments and raised the rate to 40 per cent from 33 per cent. "The measures were not thought through," said Mr Goodenough yesterday.

LCI's London casinos include Les Ambassadeurs, St James's and the Golden Nugget. Abroad, its operations include clubs in South Africa and the Bahamas.

Despite the fall in turnover Middle Eastern business had picked up, in apparent defiance of sliding oil prices, and Far Eastern players continued to try their luck, albeit in more modest casinos and with more of an eye to "money management" than had traditionally been the case.

Mr Goodenough said the market was "drawing breath", as it did periodically.

Those punting on LCI will find the wheel of fortune stuck at 2.635p for the interim dividend, unchanged on the same period last year.



Fury erupts in Port Talbot



British Steel's blast furnaces dominate Port Talbot where workers facing the sack accuse union officials of colluding with management

PHOTOGRAPH: JEFF MORGAN

1,400 Welsh steel jobs go

David Gow
Industrial Editor

ANGRY scenes have broken out at British Steel's plant in Port Talbot, South Wales, over plans to axe 855 jobs in an effort to cut costs and boost flagging earnings. Employees threatened with the sack accused officials of the main steel union, the ISTC, at a stormy meeting this week of colluding with managers in precluding long-serving staff from joining the new "teams" who will effectively run the production line. Instead, they had opted for younger workers.

There have been allegations that staff and managers have engaged in

fisticuffs within the plant and that managers' cars have been vandalised. These are denied strenuously by the company.

John Walne, personnel manager for Port Talbot and its sister Welsh plant, Llanwern, said last night: "We recognise there are tensions within the works and there may well have been some full-blooded verbal exchanges but there have not been the violent incidents people have talked about."

Port Talbot and Llanwern, near Newport, are taking the brunt of the job cuts planned by British Steel as it struggles to avoid moving into the red because of a collapse in prices, dumping by foreign producers, the strong

pound and the economic downturn. Last month it declared a 24 per cent drop in first-half earnings to £108 million.

It is to axe 855 jobs at Port Talbot, with 505 going by the end of March and a further 350 by the end of September. Llanwern will lose 490 posts in the same period, with total employees at each plant reduced to 3,000 compared with the 20,000 employed at Port Talbot alone some 20 years ago.

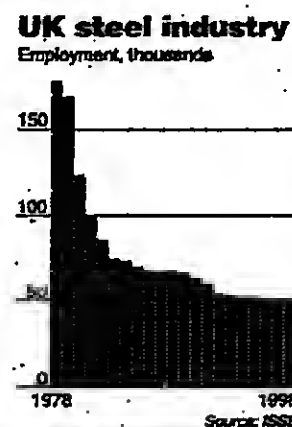
Feelings are running particularly high at Port Talbot as it is the first of the company's big integrated plants to introduce "team-working". Under the scheme, which was agreed with the ISTC 18 months ago, hundreds of

middle managers will be "delayed" and single status employees will manage their own production lines. Jobs are also going be-

cause the plant on the Severn Estuary, east of Swansea, is investing £126 million in a new continuous annealing line, described by both management and unions as of world-best standard and guaranteeing the plant's future well into the next millennium.

Hundreds of angry employees plan to appeal against their exclusion from the new teams, claiming the ISTC has abandoned the last in, first out principle. Lord (Keith) Brookman, leader of the ISTC, said: "If there's any skulduggery with the employer in picking blue-eyed boys, my people will sort that out. We will run with the ball but won't accept hard redundancies."

Source: ISSS



Railtrack profit threat prompts Chunnel rethink

Support for link may be abandoned as regulator gets tough, writes **Keith Harper**

RAILTRACK was last night poised to abandon backing for the Channel Tunnel rail link's second phase after a threat by the regulator to introduce tougher controls on Railtrack charges.

Senior executives were said to be dismayed that the new regulator, Chris Bolt, is ready to introduce draconian controls to the charges for train companies' access to the network. They expect a "negative" announcement from Mr Bolt who is said to be ready to impose crippling restrictions

on Railtrack's profitability after 2001 when new rules are introduced.

Mr Bolt is likely to say he wants the asset base on which Railtrack earnings are assessed to be set as low as £2.5 billion, the company's value at flotation three years ago. He is expected to argue that "acceptable" returns should be fixed at some 6 per cent of that value.

The proposals will open up a difficult period of negotiation between the regulator and Railtrack, with the

Deputy Prime Minister, John Prescott, facing a dilemma. He wants the regulator to be tough with Railtrack, yet is relying on the company to invest heavily in the Channel Tunnel rail link and the London Underground.

Railtrack's shares, which have performed spectacularly since flotation, are likely to react sharply today to any suggestion that its profits should be capped.

Mr Bolt, who has the job in an acting capacity, pending a permanent appointment, is anxious to make an impression. His predecessor, John Swift, was criticised for being too soft on Railtrack.

Rail companies came in for renewed criticism yesterday from the national passenger

watchdog, the Central Rail Users' Consultative Committee. It recorded a 39 per cent increase in complaints to 4,996 between July and August. David Bertram, the committee's chairman, said: "The reality is that reliability and punctuality are now on a roller coaster when privatisation began."

Companies most complained about included Great Western, Wales & West and Connex South East. The committee said that Richard Branson's Virgin west coast main line service was still at the bottom of the punctuality league over the 12 months to September 1998. It ran only 74.4 per cent of trains on time, against a target of 90 per cent.

Ivor Warburton, chairman of the Association of Train Operating Companies, said: "Performance and reliability will improve noticeably once railways start to feel the benefit of new trains. At the moment we've got the builders in."

Prism, the operator of two lines out of London and services in Wales and the West, yesterday blamed Railtrack for delays in parts of its operation. Chief executive Giles Pearson said sustained failures hit passenger confidence. This had clearly been seen in Wales and the West "where Railtrack's performance is far from satisfactory".

He said that profits for the year will not meet expectations. First half profits fell from £4.2 million to £300,000 because of one-off factors, but the company said it was continuing to invest heavily in passenger growth.



Mum says Safeway aren't very good at advertising slogans

Tony Levene

SAFEWAY broke the Advertising Standards Authority's "legal, decent, honest and truthful" code in a newspaper campaign claiming that it was cheaper than rival supermarket chain Tesco, the watchdog body has ruled. Tesco objected to the headline "Mum says Safeway aren't very good at sums" in an advert which featured receipts from both stores for the same 19 items. The Safeway "basket" was £5.34 or 11.4 per cent cheaper.

But Britain's biggest grocery chain emerged victorious on five of its six complaints. Tesco maintained the Safeway list was "unbalanced" because 85 per cent of the claimed savings came from just four items. The ASA agreed. It was also concerned that three of the four items were alcohol products.

Only someone buying a bottle of wine, a 12-pack of canned lager and a bottle of whisky could make the claimed savings. The watchdog says in its December report published today: "This does not repre-

sent an average weekly shop." Safeway maintained it had selected a range of goods that "represented an average basket".

The ASA upheld a second complaint because Safeway's advertisement claimed "you'll find that Safeway can't be beaten on the things you buy the most". This implied that customers could make a savings across all goods. This was "misleading", because the supermarket could not show its goods were on average 11.4 per cent cheaper across those items people buy most.

The advertising watchdog also hit out at Safeway because it chose seven items for its basket which were promoted that week as special offers. Only two Tesco items were on special offer. Tesco was also victorious in allegations that the headline was denigratory and that a reference to Safeway's Triple Points - a campaign now discontinued - was "unfairly clear to regular Safeway shoppers".

Safeway had one face-saving point - in its interpretation of its own "price protected" scheme.

Football and bad weather hit profit at S&N

Julia Finch

Britain's biggest brewer yesterday blamed the World Cup, bad summer weather and Nomura, the Japanese bank which is now Britain's biggest pub landlord, for a profits downturn.

Scottish & Newcastle, whose interests range from John Smith's beer to Cantor Paros holiday villages and Chef & Brewer pubs, unveiled first-half profits down £10 million at £214 million.

Brian Stewart, the chief executive, described July and August as "exceptional and extraordinary". Drinkers had stayed home to watch the football in early July, and bad weather thereafter had meant they were not tempted out to quench their thirsts.

The market for lager, said S&N, was down by 1 per cent in the period, while ale was 8 per cent worse off. Mr Stewart said the downturn in ale drinking nationwide was "a concern", especially as the drink was becoming more popular abroad. Brewing profits were also



S&N's financial director Derek Wilkinson and chief executive Brian Stewart take a drink at the Woodstock 'community pub' in London's West End

hit by the termination of an exclusive beer-supply agreement that S&N had with a vast chain of pubs now called the Grand Pub Company and owned by Nomura.

When the supply agreement came to an end, Nomura replaced the deal with a multi-brewer agreement, which slashed S&N's sales and prompted a round of redundancies. Analysts have estimated that the ending of the deal will cost S&N up to £30 million. The group's pub busi-

ness, however, continues to grow. Operating profit from its retail division rose by 12.5 per cent to £114.7 million, and it now makes in more cash than brewing from just over 40 per cent of the turnover.

Mr Stewart said current spending levels were volatile and customers remained "nervous". People did have money to spend and when they did splash out they were choosing quality brands, which was a benefit to S&N. The shares rose 15.5p to 719.5p

High street shunned for Calais run

Roger Cowe

RETAILERS fretting over dwindling takings and wondering where all the shoppers have gone should look across the Channel. According to Eurotunnel and ferry operators, hordes of people are doing their Christmas shopping in Calais this year.

"More and more people are realising there are savings to be made shopping on the other side of the Channel," said a spokesman for the ferry firm P&O Stena.

He said the fleet was carrying about 9,500 cars on a typical Saturday at the moment, but comparisons could not be made with last year when P&O and Stena were competing operators.

Eurotunnel carried an average 11,000 cars a day in November, which was almost half as many again as in November 1997. It is not known how many of these vehicles were "white vans", which are reputedly used by "booster smugglers".

Hoverspeed, which accounts for a little under a tenth of Channel traffic, said customer numbers were almost a third higher than last year.

A spokesman said business had surged since the middle of November - to a level 29 per

cent higher than the same period last year. "It's obvious just from being out and about in Dover," he said. "There are traffic jams even without a strike. There is a lot of queuing up to get on the ferries."

Hoverspeed said it carried 28,000 passengers over its busiest weekend. It would not take people long to recoup the £22 charge for a car and two people on a day trip. Buying £200 of goods would recover the fare if French prices were 10 per cent lower than in Britain. For some products, such as beer, the savings are much more than 10 per cent.

Even the Eurotunnel fare of £39 - booked 21 hours in advance - would soon be paid for, especially if there were five people in the car.

The flood of Britons taking their custom to France could explain why many leading shops have had to resort to special promotions, even at this time of year, when shoppers should be at their most enthusiastic.

However, it will take a while for the Channel trippers to outnumber the throngs doing their Christmas shopping at Britain's huge malls. Lakeside, the gigantic shopping palace near Thurrock in Essex, saw 105,000 customers pass through its doors last Saturday.

Falling confidence triggered rate cut

Mark Atkinson
Economics Correspondent

DECLINING business and consumer confidence was the significant factor behind last week's cut in interest rates by the 11 founding members of the euro, Wim Duisenberg, President of the European Central Bank, said yesterday.

At a time of "much greater than usual uncertainties" in the economy, the rate cut was also intended to stop market speculation about the ECB's intentions on interest rates. Mr Duisenberg told the European Parliament's committee on economic and monetary affairs. All the countries except Italy cut rates to 3 per cent, which will be the starting rate when the ECB takes over monetary policy control with the launch of the euro on January 1. Italy cut to 3.5 per cent.

Painting a cautious picture of the economic situation in the euro zone, Mr Duisenberg said growth was expected to slow to 2.4 per cent in 1999 from 2.8 per cent this year, but the general view was that the slowdown would be temporary.

"It is expected that growth might slightly accelerate again in the course of the year 2000," he said, adding, however, that the forecast had to be treated with care.

Meanwhile, some fall in confidence in the retail sector seemed to be developing, he said. "One of the main motivations behind the recent decision to lower interest rates was a faltering of confidence, predominantly in the business area, and in some countries private households."

Even as he was speaking, Germany announced that for the first time in nearly a year, its unemployment figure had risen - by almost 4,000.

Weakening consumer and business confidence in Britain as a result of the global downturn has also helped trigger rate cuts by the Bank of England's monetary policy committee, which meets again today and tomorrow amid expectations of a third successive monthly reduction. The monthly poll of business polls, published yesterday by accountants BDO Stoy Hayward, found that British businesses expect the economy to be in recession by the middle of next year.

Ken Jackson, general secretary of the Amalgamated Engineering and Electrical Union, said last week's move to the euro will help to avert a European economic slowdown. "If UK manufacturing is to compete abroad, we need a dose of the same medicine."

News in brief

M&S supplier axes 150 jobs in Ireland

A NORTHERN Ireland clothing manufacturer which is a leading supplier to Marks & Spencer announced yesterday that it is cutting its workforce by nearly 150 because of a downturn in high-street sales.

Desmond and Sons, which employs 3,400 people at 12 sites across the province, is making 45 workers redundant and a further 100 have opted to go voluntarily.

Last month Desmond announced that it would have to cut its workforce by 225, three days after M&S revealed that half-year profits had slumped by nearly 50 per cent. The private family-owned company, with an annual turnover of more than £100 million, supplies all of its produce to Marks. - PA

Abbey National board rejig

ABBEY National will reshuffle its board in April when Charles Turner, deputy chief executive, will retire from the bank and its two deputy chairmen will be replaced. Mr Turner, once tipped as a potential chief executive, has been with the former building society for 35 years and will not be replaced directly. Keith Woodley will become deputy chairman and executive director Charles Villiers an executive deputy chairman. - Jill Treanor

Ascot buys German group

ASCOT, a British chemical and specialist engineering company, has agreed to buy Haltermann Group of Germany for DM250 million (£90 million) in cash and shares, creating what Ascot said will be the world's largest independent chemicals contract processor.

The link-up will create a company with contract processing activities in Britain, Germany, Belgium and the US.

Paper chain sheds 250 staff

UP TO 250 jobs are to be cut by newspaper group Regional Independent Media, the company confirmed yesterday. RIM, which has newspaper and magazine titles at 10 operating companies across Yorkshire and the North-west, said the losses would be concentrated at its two biggest centres, in Leeds at the Yorkshire Post and Yorkshire Evening Post, and in Sheffield at The Star.

Laura Ashley leases back HQ

BRITISH clothing retailer Laura Ashley Holdings Plc said yesterday that it had sold and leased back its London headquarters premises for £4.54 million plus VAT. The price includes a rent free period for the next 12 months. Laura Ashley has been struggling recently and has been forced to reduce manufacturing facilities to cut costs.

Champions League, Group D: Manchester United v Bayern Munich

Moment of truth for United

David Lacey on Alex Ferguson's attempt tonight to lead the Old Trafford club to their third quarter-final stage in as many years

NEVER was there a better time for Manchester United to abandon the spirit of giving, Christmas or no Christmas. When Bayern Munich come to Old Trafford tonight Alex Ferguson's players would do well to ignore those seasonal ghosts that persuade misers to become philanthropists.

Up to now United have been happy to trade goals with Barcelona and Bayern and fill their nets against Brondby. But this evening they cannot afford the generosity which has repeatedly cost them winning positions, one in Munich at the end of September.

After a stuttering start Manchester United are on the brink of qualifying for the quarter-finals for the third time in successive tournaments. Victory over Bayern would take them to the knockout stage as group winners and while a draw might still be enough, this is not guaranteed.

Bayern, on the other hand, know that avoiding defeat will be sufficient to win Group D. Two victories over Barcelona and a win against Brondby have left them in top place with 10 points, one ahead of United.

United. In Munich Paul Scholes strode through their defence to score like a man cutting corn. Tonight Bayern will be hard pressed to keep up with the movement and interpassing of Dwight Yorke and Andy Cole, and with Ryan Giggs back on the left the odds are that their cover will be blown more than once.

The return of Giggs following a broken bone in a foot should tip what promises to be a finely balanced game in United's favour. While Jesper Blomqvist has been a highly effective deputy, Giggs at his best will terrorise any defence and after coming off the United bench at Tottenham and Aston Villa, the Welshman should now be ready.

Yet there has to be a controlled performance. The quicker Roy Keane and Scholes establish command over Stefan Effenberg and Jens Jeremies in midfield the better it will be for Old Trafford's peace of mind.

Equally important will be the consistency with which Wes Brown stems the advance of Bixente Lizarazu on the Bayern left, and the closeness of the watch kept by Jasp Stam and Gary Neville on Giovanni Elber.

United cannot afford to



Old flapper... Bayern see Schmeichel as United's weak link after the error that reprieved them in Munich

BEN RADFORD

Elber chips at the chinks in Schmeichel's armour

Daniel Taylor finds Bayern Munich in loudly confident mood

PETER SCHMEICHEL'S faltering Manchester United career reached a new low last night when he was pinpointed as the weak link in their make-up by Bayern Munich's Brazilian striker Giovanni Elber.

Elber profited from one of Schmeichel's greatest mistakes to earn the German side a last-minute draw in the Champions League match at the Olympic Stadium in Munich in September.

If United fail to reach the quarter-finals, the goalkeeper's clanger, when he collided with Jasp Stam in an attempt to clear a harmless throw-in and left Elber with an open goal, will be seen as the pivotal point in their qualifying campaign.

Schmeichel, who recently

announced his intention to leave Old Trafford at the end of the season and return to the Continent, also committed two costly errors against Barcelona last month at the Non Camp. It is clear Bayern have been paying close attention to the once invincible Danish international during their pre-match preparations.

"Schmeichel has been at fault for Manchester United in recent European and league games and it is

our job to capitalise," said Elber.

"We have studied videos of recent games to see United's weaknesses and strengths as part of our preparations and they show that Schmeichel has made a big mistake in nearly every match.

"We are all hoping that it happens again. It is clear that United are very strong in attack but they have problems in defence and we must take advantage."

Group D

Bayern Munich... P W D L F A Pts
Man Utd... 2 3 1 1 8 5 7
Barcelona... 1 2 2 0 9 8 5
Brondby... 0 1 4 4 8 6 1

Bayern's 18-man squad arrived in a typically rain-swept Manchester yesterday afternoon and had a light training session at Old Trafford where their coach Ottmar Hitzfeld was suitably unimpressed by the condition of a pitch resembling a patchwork quilt.

"It is the job of the coach to be well informed about the opposition and I am fully aware about everything — from the danger players to the problems with the pitch," he said.

Hitzfeld, who masterminded Borussia Dortmund's victory over United in the semi-finals two years ago, was strikingly composed during a packed press conference at the Manchester Marriott Hotel and Country Club.

"I would say without any shadow of a doubt that Bayern are better than the Dortmund side," he said. "We had a bad start in the quarter-finals and if we go through this so-called Group of Death as winners it would be nothing short of sensational. In our current position, however, I am sure we can go through to the quarter-finals and win the competition."

"The German national team and club sides have a good record against the English and my players know from the past that a German team can win in Manchester. We have respect, but no fear."

Uefa Cup, third round, second leg

Parma 3 Rangers 1 (agg 4-2)

Italian twist lands Rangers in a heap

Patrick Olsenn in Parma

RANGERS were knocked out of Europe yesterday as stupidity played a blinder at the San Siro stadium. Ironically it was the Scottish team's own Italians, rather than Parma's, who were the biggest problem.

Having taken a first-half lead and established a rhythm which created problems for Rangers, the Italians began their descent into ignominy when the defender Sergio Porrini was sent off a few seconds before the interval.

His fellow Italian and Rangers' captain Lorenzo Amoruso, produced an even greater aberration later when he deliberately handled the ball in an unthreatening position to give the Parma the penalty from which they put the tie beyond reach.

To those appalling moments, Rangers did not so much about themselves in the foot as put the gun to their temple. They could not hope to survive such action as the tournament favourites showed themselves capable of exploiting good fortune.

Until they equalised early in the second half, Parma had looked unlikely to capitalise on having the most accomplished player on the pitch in Juan Sebastian Veron. The Argentinian's prompting had produced little response from his strikers.

Nevertheless, Abel Balbo missed an easy chance for Parma before, in the 28th minute, Jorg Albertz gave Rangers the lead. Roberto Sensi's nonchalant pass was directed straight at Albertz, who moved forward, shrugged off Sensi and drove a low, left-foot shot from the edge of the area to the left of Gianluigi Buffon.

With Rangers' primary objective achieved — they had to secure to survive — they took the heat out of Parma's attacks. But Porrini, having been booked only two minutes earlier for a foul on Veron, launched a late challenge on the same player and was sent off for his second bookable offence. The 10 men held out for the last three minutes of the second half.

Veron again initiated the damage, delivering a tantalising centre from the right that Culin Henry and Amoruso misjudged, the ball dropping behind them to Enrico Chiesa. The striker headed it across and Balbo tapped in.

Rangers could do little to prevent the 62nd-minute goal which gave Parma the lead. Veron's free-kick was headed out by Alberto Tomba. Fiorentina, who had replaced Alain Boghossian six minutes earlier, and he drove ferociously from 20 yards high to the left of Antti Niemi.

Then, five minutes later, came Amoruso's blunder. Veron's free-kick was headed out by Alberto Tomba. Fiorentina, who had replaced Alain Boghossian six minutes earlier, and he drove ferociously from 20 yards high to the left of Antti Niemi.

Parma (3-4-1-2): Buffon, Traversi, Sensi, Gensini, Fava, Balbo, Baggio, Boghossian (Fava, 54, Benarrivo, Veron), Balbo, Chiesa (Crispien 73), Sensi, Tomba, Portanova, Amoruso (Nanni, 67), Fergan (Miller, 80), Fergan, Miller (Fergan, 80), Wallace (Lecchi, 77), Dini (Vidoni, 78), Marzetti (T. Hauge (Norway).

Wise must rise to home occasion

Russell Thomas

DENNIS WISE is set to captain Chelsea against Aston Villa tonight knowing it is likely to be his last Stamford Bridge performance until mid-January, hardly leadership by example as the manager Gianluca Vialli presses for his team to become unquestionable rather than potential title contenders.

Wise's three-game ban, having the effect of ruling him out of future home Premier League matches until January 16, should see the captain striving to make the most of rare opportunity against the leaders which, incidentally marks the midfielder's first Stamford Bridge start in the league this campaign.

Wise's third suspension this season is all the more unfortunate because of worries over his free-scoring fellow midfielder Gustavo Poyet, who has just visited a specialist for a scan on the knee torn sustained at Everton on Saturday.

A victory to follow Chelsea's Worthington Cup win over Villa will see Vialli's team up into third place, a point behind Manchester United and two behind John Gregory's team.

Gregory must decide whether to keep faith with the scoring Julian Joachim or recall Stan Collymore, whose illness and then suspension kept him out of the last two games.

Dean Saunders' transfer to Benfica could see Sheffield United signing two strikers from the Portuguese club. United have been offered the former West Ham striker Hugo Portinho and the Swede Martin Fringie in an exchange deal.

Both clubs are short of

money. Benfica would rather offload two players in whom United's manager Steve Bruce has shown persistent interest than pay a fee of about £400,000.

But Graeme Souness's club have committed themselves to signing Saunders by whatever method. The Welsh striker has been paraded before fans in Portugal already.

David Batty has completed his £4.4 million return to Leeds from Newcastle while Rangers may sign Stefan Klos before Christmas after the Borussia Dortmund goalkeeper was given permission to talk to the Ibrox club.

Manchester United's chairman Martin Edwards has agreed to meet supporters opposed to Sky's proposed £623.4 million takeover. He will meet members of the Independent Manchester United Supporters Association (IMUSA) at Old Trafford tomorrow.

IMUSA has been trying for three years to persuade Edwards to see them over other issues, so the meeting represents a breakthrough for the fans' group.

The former Bristol City manager John Ward is set to become Colin Lee's No 5 at Wolves. Ward, who left City last month, will move to Molineux on a non-contract basis and was due to meet Lee last night at a reserve match with Sheffield Wednesday.

Hartlepool have launched an investigation into an alleged incident in the players' lounge at Fulham after the North-east club's 4-2 FA Cup second-round defeat on Saturday.

Kevin Keegan's club have contacted Hartlepool after claims of a clash between the Argentinean midfielder Gustavo Di Lella and Fulham's Simon Morgan.

Wenger's depleted troops set for pre-Christmas stuffing

Jon Brodwin in Athens

NO ONE could have blamed Arsenal's depleted squad had they pleaded a touch of the Dennis Bergkamp and chosen not to fly here at all. Travelling 1,500 miles for the Group E match where victory will be meaningless is bad enough. Doing so without most of your first-

team squad looks a recipe for a pre-Christmas stuffing.

Their manager Arsène Wenger at least brightened the mood yesterday by finally signing a 3½-year extension to his contract. It was, he said, a straightforward decision despite several tempting offers to move abroad.

"I took into consideration the fact that I have a lot of players on long contracts and

the fact that I am happy here," he said. "I don't want to move at the moment to a different country. I don't want to go back to France to manage — ever. But I see a move after my managerial career as a director or president of a club somewhere. In England it's impossible but in France it's possible."

Yet the Arsenal fans need not worry about Wenger

swapping the sausages of Highbury for the caviar of the boardroom just yet. The contract, he emphasised, has no get-out clauses: "I don't accept it for the players, though it would be difficult for me."

This evening's fixture promises to be more problematic. Of the regular cast only David Seaman and Nicolas Anelka look certain to play, though given Arsenal's injury

jinx they met yet slip in the shower and join a casualty list which includes Marc Overmars, Tony Adams, Patrick Vieira, Emmanuel Petit and Nigel Winterburn.

With Lee Dixon and Ray Parlour suspended and Fredrik Ljungberg ineligible it is probably just as well that Arsenal's hopes of reaching the quarter-finals were ending the night of a fortnight ago.

A stronger Arsenal side lost 5-0 to Chelsea in the Worthington Cup last month and Panathinaikos have a 2-1 defeat at Wembley to avenge and could yet reach the next round. A win in the Olympic Stadium will suffice if Lens and Dynamo Kiev draw the group's other match.

Arsenal (possible) 4-4-2: Seaman; Grimandi, Boulton, Upson, Grondoni; Vieira, Mendez, Geris, Bos Moritz; Wron, Anelka.

Team talk

The independent news and reports service

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Arsenal	60	Derby County	72	Nottm. Forest	65
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Crystal Palace	71	Sheff. Wed.	83	West Ham	94
Crewe	13	Norwich City	84	Wolves	95

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The Guardian INTERACTIVE

Results

Football

UEFA CUP

Third round, second leg

Liverpool (0) 0
Celta Vigo (0) 1
(agg: 1-4)

Rangers (1) 1
Bodo (0) 0
(agg: 2-0)

Chelsea (0) 0
Bodo (0) 0
(agg: 0-0)

Lyons (0) 0
Bodo (0) 0
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(agg: 0-0)

First Division

Crystal Palace (0) 1
Jensen 68
12.01

Tranmere (0) 1
Thompson 66

Tranmere (0) 1
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Second Division

Lincoln (0) 1
Holmes 21
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Fifth Division

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Sixth Division

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Seventh Division

Lincoln (0) 1
Holmes 21
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Lincoln (0) 1
Holmes 21
2.07

Oxford blue yet again, page 13

Australians admit Test fines, page 15

Rangers lose their way, page 14

World cup doubts over Thorpe, page 15

SportsGuardian

Uefa Cup

Third round, second leg: Liverpool 0 Celta Vigo 1 (agg 1-4)

Liverpool limp out of Europe

Ian Ross at Anfield sees Houllier's less-than-likely lads turned inside out

BRITISH interest in this season's competition ended on a miserable night at Anfield, Liverpool comprehensively defeated by the largely unheralded ball players of Celta Vigo.

Hopelessly understrength and bedevilled by inconsistency, the Merseysiders were outplayed and outmanoeuvred, much as they had been a fortnight earlier.

They never seemed capable of overturning the first-leg deficit and but for the improbable excellence of the goalkeeper David James, it would have been an embarrassing more than a simple defeat.

On a night which cried out for old hands to utilise their experience Liverpool were lacking Paul Ince, Steve McManis, Jamie Redknapp and Vegard Heggem, all suspended.

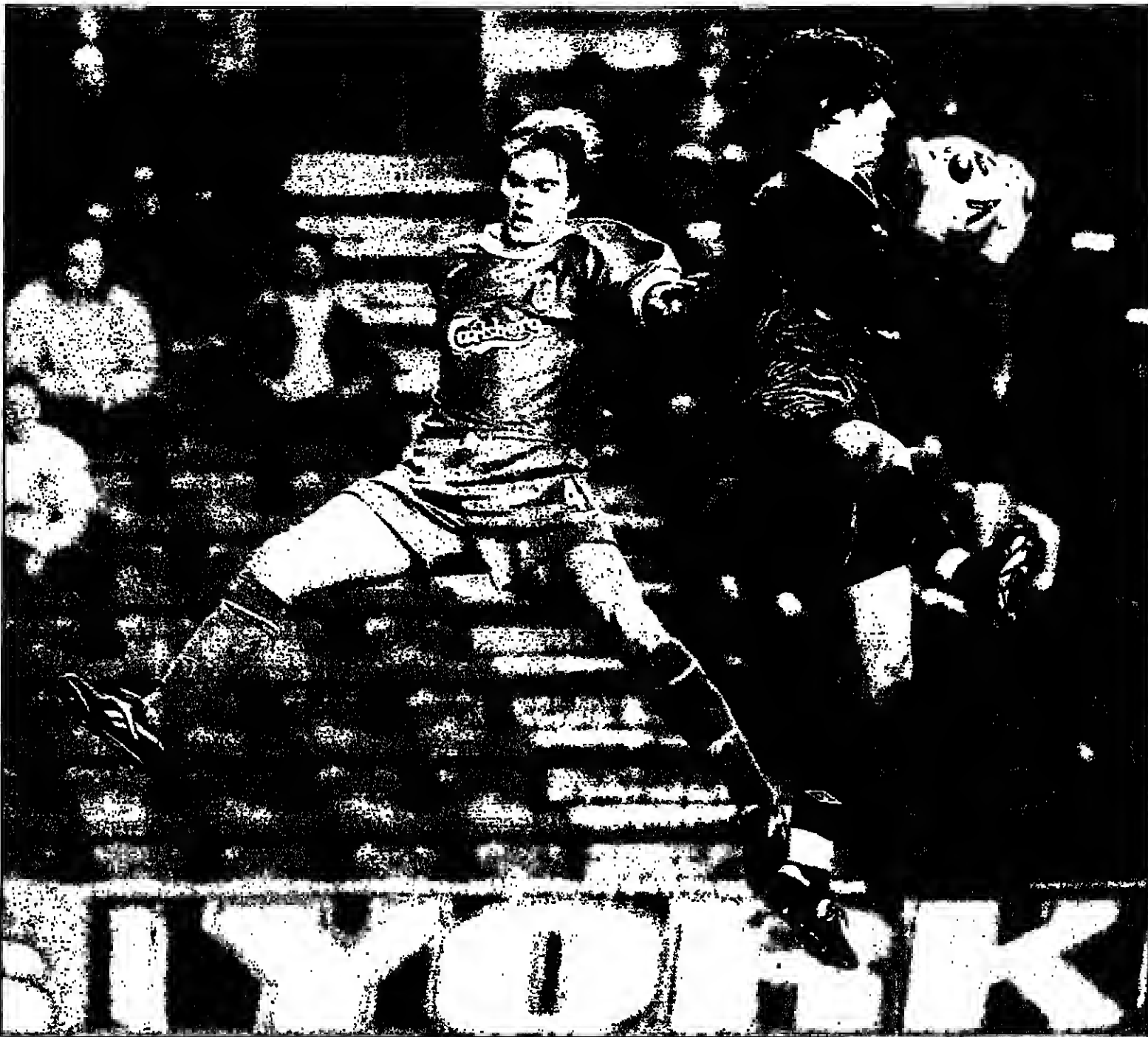
And so the Merseysiders fielded a weakened midfield and a fit but appallingly generous defence which, surprisingly, featured Dominic Matteo for the first time this season.

It is this relative paucity of resources which has prompted Gerard Houllier to search for players. The Liverpool manager is studying a shortlist of six men, mostly central defenders who can pass the ball thoughtfully.

Before the match he was even attempting to sign one of Arsenal's primary targets, Cyril Domoraud. The France Under-21 international is likely to leave Marseille on a free in the summer and will be able to sign a pre-contract agreement on January 1.

The match was barely 60 seconds old when Phil Babb did his utmost to render meaningless everything that was to follow. It was classic Babb — his inability to control a long clearance which dropped over his left shoulder inviting Juan Sanchez to collect and sprint clear. The Spaniard should have scored but the sight of James scurrying forwards distracted him, and his low shot hit the goalkeeper before drifting just over the crossbar.

The game moved between the penalty areas at almost reckless speed as the two sides chased quite differing



Playing catch up... Jason McAteer of Liverpool loses out to the Celta Vigo's goalkeeper Richard Dutruel

PHOTOGRAPH BY IAN HODGSON

objectives, Liverpool a route back and Vigo the goal which would put them in the comfort zone.

Despite Liverpool's admirably frenetic workrate the visitors seemed the more likely scorers simply because their approach, particularly in central midfield, was more measured and far more composed. Once Liverpool's initial

adrenalin rush had subsided the better of the chances fell to Spanish feet. Sanchez enjoyed a second inviting opportunity after 13 minutes but as he shaped to turn home Valeri Karpin's low cross from the right wing, Jamie Carragher intervened.

Curiously, Houllier chose not to lose caution to the wind during the interval, stiffening

midfield by introducing Danny Murphy rather than pepping up attack with Karlheinz Riedle. A strange decision. Still Vigo swept forward and with Liverpool pushing more and more bodies up front a Spanish breakthrough always seemed to be close.

It almost came five minutes after the re-start when Karpin climaxed a fine four-man

move with a raking drive that James did well to deflect to safety with his leg.

And then Liverpool were consumed by the inevitable. In the 56th minute their defence was scattered by Claude Makelele's marvellous cross-field pass to Michael Rejov.

He walked past both Murphy and Steven Gerrard before steering home low and

hard. It was a fine goal, beautifully crafted and well deserved. Liverpool's response? Why, to introduce Riedle.

Liverpool (3-5-2): James (Friedel, 61min); Babb (Murphy, 1-3), Matteo, Carragher, McAteer, Gerrard, Thompson (Friedel, 56), Berge, Stuarton, Owen, Fowler.

Celta Vigo (4-4-2): Dutruel; Salgado, Cacares, Djorovic, Berge; Karpin, Macinho (Caires, 50), Veloso, Moron; Rejov (Tomaz, 77), Juan Sanchez (Gaddi, 70).

Referee: H Strampe (Germany).

United hopes in lap of gods or Beckham



David Hopps

IN THAILAND this week, prayers are being offered to the Sun God that light should prevail over darkness and that the Asian Games survives the pressures caused by crippling economic meltdown.

In England, with the Christmas festivities afflicted by talk of recession, there is also reason enough to appeal to the Sun God, were it not for the fact that Rupert Murdoch gets enough publicity already.

Tonight, though, there is no escaping the fact. It is left with the Sun God's team — or at least the team coveted by his satellite television empire, Manchester United — to shake us all from the moribund state triggered by a succession of dank and dark winter days.

Victory for United against Bayern Munich at Old Trafford should be an occasion for general admiration. It is just such a shame that at least half the football supporters in the land will find the very thought of a United victory loathsome.

The likelihood is that, one hundred years from now, United will field a reserve side in European competitions in the belief that the Inter-Planetary Conference must take priority. Such is their insatiable ambition. But the Champions League is the ultimate prize and, if the screaming, incessantly hyped-up world of the Premiership has any substance in reality, then it is time an English club won it. Manchester United, like it or not, are justifying the reputation of an entire league.

To their detractors, United are ideally suited to the excess of a modern Christmas: more pampered than the posh child whining with boredom in the Harrods toy department.

But the knee-jerk yearning for their downfall — beloved of millions — is a twisted passion based upon the English failings of negativity and parochialism; a jealous refusal to admire excellence whenever it reveals itself. And nowhere is this more evident than in the case of

David Beckham. If tonight holds significance for any player, it is Beckham. Even now, the petulant retaliation which brought his red card as England crashed out of the World Cup still rankles. Many who had witnessed his epistolical fusties in the Premiership insisted that "he had it coming to him".

Beckham's folly, though, was negligible compared to the bile that greeted it. Radio phone-ins, Internet chat-lines and public bars resounded to one of the most hateful episodes in English football history. Beckham's ego had not only destroyed him, it had damaged millions of other vicarious egos in the process. Beckham's glamorous lifestyle has made his rehabilitation much more painful. The balance that might be provided by a "normal life" is virtually non-existent; both on the field with United and off it with his Spice Girl fiancée. Life is a perpetual performance.

UNITED supporters apart, many fans still flaunt their resentment. Want a printed T-shirt? How about this one, sir? A nice caricature of the happy couple with the crowd offering such traditional English joviality as "Watch that wedding tackle luv!" and "Yer won't be scoring tonight, yer spilt bastard!" With Beckham, the libido is part of the show.

If, as Freud had it, the ego represents the personality, then what Manchester United require tonight from David Beckham is a touch more super-ego — a self-critical, controlling influence which demands responsibility to go with the immense talent. A recognition that, however much he might strut and shine, the referee remains the ultimate authority, and that an occasional robust foul is a fact of life.

Fostering that super-ego, in footballing terms, has been the responsibility given to Alex Ferguson and if he fails then his ambition of winning the Champions League will be lost, too. Bayern, surely, will grasp the chance to test Beckham's temperament. For a man whose entire life is preyed upon by tabloid neuroses, level-headedness is quite a challenge. Given success, let light prevail over darkness. Given failure, welcome to the Premiership recession.

David Lowy, page 14

Gullit boosted by directors' return

John Wardle

RUUD GULLIT is likely to be the only winner after Newcastle's United were plunged into more boardroom turmoil yesterday. Gullit's pursuit of new players may have been given a fillip after the controversial comeback of the directors Freddie Shepherd and Douglas Hall.

The pair rejoined the

club's plc board after resigning following a scandal earlier this year. Their return caused immediate upheaval, with United's share price dropping as three directors and the club's stockholders resigned in protest. But Gullit's hand will be strengthened because the two major shareholders are back in total control.

The pair are free to sell their shares next week or they may choose to personally invest in Gullit's team-building.

Gullit, already guaranteed \$4.4 million to spend following the sale of David Batty to Leeds yesterday, has made Ajax's Richard Witschge his No. 1 target. He knows there will be no obstacles placed in his way if he does try to push through a deal.

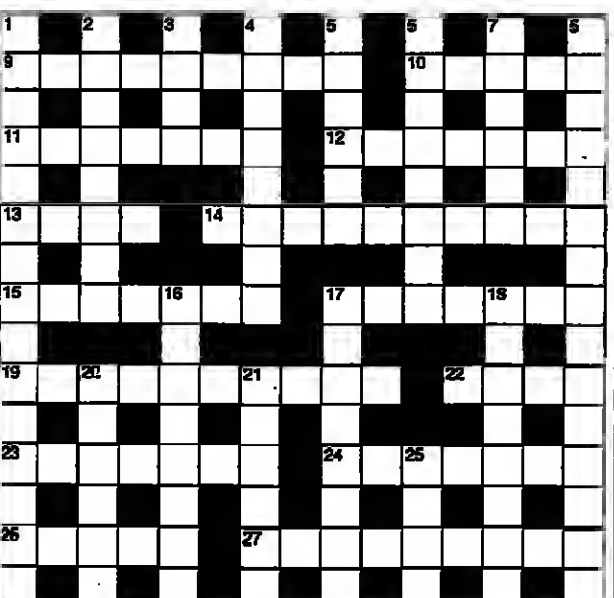
He and Shepherd previously needed to consult the

plc before sanctioning deals. "It will be different now," said a Newcastle insider. "Deals should be a lot easier because they won't need an answer from the plc boardroom. This will cut out the middleman and that's important when players and clubs want quick decisions on transfers."

Boardroom shake-up, page 15

Guardian Crossword No 21,453

Set by Araucaria



Across

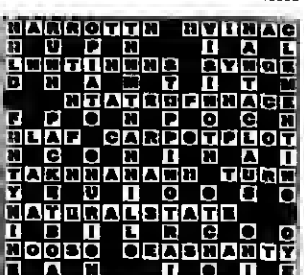
- 9 Complex character in films, circa (roughly) a year (9)
10, 22 Religious group, if reverting to silence, goes with sharks (5-4)
11 Under its shade nude forefathers slept yet were aroused (3,4)
12 Sophist's tomad? (7)

- 13 Not 22 — it sounds repulsive (4)
14 Mac's sick terrapin, not at home in a bark (10)
15 Louis and Susan on screen dealing with enclosures? (7)
17 Food for setter? Paté, I want (4,3)
18 Leave car after Russian reversed round it? That's life (5,5)

- 22 See 10
23 Cat in "The Romances of Chivalry" (7)
24 Connive at king leaving to steal pictures? (7)
26 See 25
27 Welsh flower — arrange duet without most of sorrow returning (5,4)

Down

- 1 ... another one? Girl (frequently boy) on fifth street? (4,2,3,6)
2 Non-paying passenger — pull one into rock (8)
3 Row with matchmaker? (4)
4 Bid adieu to group crossing the channel? (8)
5 Aspiring attempt in wood of evergreen shrub (6)
6 Stewed apples, it may be? (5,3)
7 More than one over the eight at b-bingo (6)
8 Flower of the forest he confused with balm (4,2,5)
16 Everyone English sanguine like Pilgrim's Progress (8)
17 Steep ascent of Daniel into French girl's embrace (8)
18 Russian politician shifting a lot of vodka under the rose? (8)
20 The Red Cat — losing his head for love (6)
21 Talk Afghan or shut up? (6)



25, 26 What says the little crocodile, smiling? Refer to the Walrus's mate (8)

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23 Stuck? Then call our solutions line on 0901 500 222. Calls cost 50p per minute at all times. Service supplied by ATS



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They don't need food to make sense.

The Bank of England, which holds the bullion reserves of more than 70 countries, is one of the most secretive institutions in Britain. As the bank's committee meets to set new interest rates, **Alex Brummer** offers a rare insight into life behind the forbidding walls of Threadneedle Street

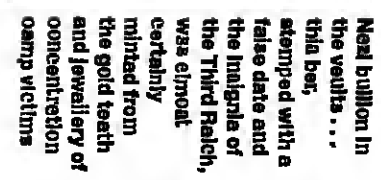
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The settlement agent for deals made on the London gold market, the biggest in the world, and stores gold for its clients. Much of the exciting gold never moves — if the government of Uzbekistan (a gold producer) wants to repay a debt to Germany, then the bank's allocation

moves from areas with elegant, highly vaulted ceilings through 190m sq ft of offices to oak-walled offices filled with oil paintings, to areas shabbily contrived partitions behind white, narrow winding corridors and cramped offices. The

lowliest, one of the few women in high places in the bank, takes over

A high-contrast, black and white photograph of a textured surface, possibly a piece of fabric or a wall. The image is dominated by a large, dark, circular feature in the center, which appears to be a hole or a deep shadow. The surrounding area is filled with intricate, organic patterns and textures, creating a sense of depth and mystery. The lighting is dramatic, with deep blacks and bright whites, emphasizing the tactile quality of the surface.



improving our campaigns, but the bank has contracted.

They date from Harold Wilson taking on the throne of Zurich in the 1967 sterling crisis, to John Major, Norman Lamont and Eddie George taking on — and being defeated by — George Soros on "Black Wednesday" in September 1992. The bank's dealing room looks like that of any commercial bank, with young dealers in braces and bright-coloured shirts sprawled over banks of screens and handling upwards of 30,000 trades a year.

But there's one difference: on the desk of the senior dealer is a bank of direct telephone connections to the City's 15 money brokers. And at the end of the trading desk are phones that connect Short and the traders directly with other City central banks.

Because trading in British carries

on being got through this period better than New York. There were no signs of heavy constraints — banks reluctant to make new or renew loans? Footnote observed. His greatest worry at present is over "pay-ments systems." Because each financial centre has different payment systems, instant settlement is impossible. This means that should one financial centre collapse, all the payments that had left it but had not arrived at their destination would not be honoured, causing shockwaves around the world. It would be as if one's wage cheque were caught in an electronic nowhere land.

The day-to-day management of the bank, from IT to the balance sheet, binds under the direction of Gordon Maltby, an unconventional figure with long hair and a penchant for extremely bright ties. Aside from indulging in the bank's balanced

On March 26, the Atlantic coast will declare the start of the spring building season. The New York has opened. It is here that great support operations for current construction begin. The bank will act on behalf of other central banks in buying up a weak currency. In an effort to strengthen a falling currency or even the pound.

The project has been described as a grandiose £40 million venture re-



Neal tonight in the south... this bag, accompanied with a false date and the handful of the Third Reich, was almost certainly minted from the gold teeth and jewelry of concentration camp victims

needed a fascist and modernizing it is the bank, whereas apart from the infamous public areas occupied by the government and his deputies, conditions are extraordinarily Victorian. The bank claims it will be fully self-financing, with disposed buildings paying for the changes, including new staff canteens and dining rooms (high above the bank's public areas). The cost might seem like bitter gruel for industrialists suffering from the effect of high interest rates and a strong pound. But then the prestige of the Bank of England — which brings so much of the world's gold and foreign exchange trade to Lon-

CENTRAL PROBATION COUNCIL

DIRECTOR

The Central Probation Council is the national organisation representing the 35 probation committees in England and Wales responsible for the governance of probation services. The post will become available upon the retirement of the current Director in the end of March 1999. Offered on a two-year contract (with the possibility of renewal), the post requires an experienced senior executive with thorough knowledge of the criminal justice system and exceptional communication and negotiating skills. The Director must have the ability to work effectively with senior professional and senior government officers, and government ministers. In the light of current government reviews of the probation services, candidates will need vision and a sense of purpose for both local and national measures in probation and the ability to formulate and implement strategic policies during a period of change. The salary, to be negotiated, will be based on conditions of service for chief probation officers. The Council is committed to equality of opportunity.

For further information and an application form, which must be returned by 5 January 1999, please telephone 0171 245 9364.

Quick Crossword No. 8926

Across

5 Famous (4-5)
 6 Cab (4)
 9 Left say —
 aphilike (6)
 10 Lane (6)
 11 Look back upon
 — critical notice
 (6)
 13 Niche (6)
 15 Swindler (3,3)
 16 Contractor
 quoted (4)
 18 Locust (4)
 19 Dunk (4-5)

Down

1 Unrattled (3)
 2 Customer (3)
 3 Source of stability
 (3)
 4 Picher (4)
 6 Was understood—
 able (4,5)
 7 Hurled (4,5)
 12 Disappeared (9)
 14 Fixed —
 somewhen for
 the horses (6)
 16 Clergyman (9)
 17 Piece (at
 informal) (4)

BLAIR- I CHALLENGE YOU TO ORDEAL BY SPORT I WANT ME YOU TALKING ABOUT

I'M TALKING ABOUT A VIGOROUS, MANLY GAME OF HAGGLES!!

GOALL!!

NOW-IT'S YOUR TURN!!

GOD, PLEASE, A CHICKEN IN BIG-TIME BUCKLE-UP! I WANT ME YOU TALKING ABOUT

I THINK IT'S TIME TO GET A VIGOROUS, MANLY GAME OF HAGGLES!!

GOALL!!

NOW-IT'S YOUR TURN!!

BY GARRY TRUDEAU

Pass notes
No 1315
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...in Manager. This job represents a unique opportunity to p...

Manager

Salary: up to £44,500pa - fixed term contract

Working as Manager of one of the four specialist teams in the More Medals Programme, his postholder will implement the Introduction of the full World Class Programme: Performance, Potential and Start. The team of eight people will work with selected governing bodies of sport to advise them on sport for people with disabilities. The planned Lottery investment in this programme is substantial. The World Class team has the responsibility for ensuring governing bodies submit plans and applications that will produce the required results for England in top level sport.

To meet the requirements of this role you will have at least five years' experience working at a senior level in sports development and a good understanding of what it takes to achieve 'World Class Performance'. You will be expected to have the ability to establish an excellent team leader with the ability to establish a high performing team. You will also intrinsically and with external partners, you will also need to exercise judgement and initiative within agreed

... that sank with enormous losses.
... Indeed.

Salary up to \$45,700pa inc. msa

Working as Manager of one of the three specialist teams in the More People programme, the postholder will implement the introduction of the Active Sport programme. This is a new initiative designed to encourage people to take this transition into performance and to bring together local authorities and governing bodies across fifty partnership areas nationwide. The planned Lottery Investment in this programme is substantial. The Active Sports team has the responsibility for ensuring local authorities submit good quality plans and applications that will provide opportunities for all young people with talent to develop and sporting performance through local clubs and development squad.

To meet the requirements of this role you will have at least five years experience in a similar role in a sports development and a good understanding of performance development structures and processes. You will need to be an excellent team leader with the ability to establish excellent working relationships internally and with external partners. You will also need to exercise judgment and initiative within agreed objectives and assure the efficient use of human and financial resources.

he threw out a reporter who
dared to ask,

[illegible]

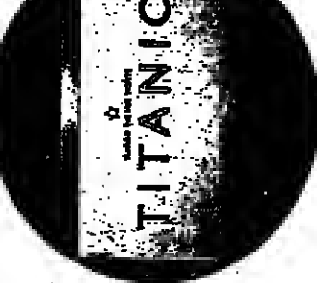
Centre for Sustainable Energy (CSE) is a non-profit environmental charity based in Bristol, requiring subject workers to join the Research and Development Department. A work on a variety of energy-related projects.

[illegible]

1000

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Exploded view diagram of the IBM 1401 computer system. The diagram shows the following components labeled with circled numbers:

- 1: Console (indicated by a curved arrow pointing to the main unit)
- 2: Control panel
- 3: Control panel
- 4: Control panel
- 5: Control panel
- 6: Control panel
- 7: Control panel
- 8: Control panel
- 9: Control panel
- 10: Control panel

At the bottom of the diagram, the text reads: "IBM and the IBM logo are trademarks of International Business Machines Corporation."

Now

6 Gold trucks: Britain's Mint security services deliver gold from producing countries such as Uzbekistan and South Africa, and distribute it to big players in the London bullion market and commercial precious metal dealers.

7 Governor's office: Eddie George, who was sworn in last September, occupied his new office in the second term. George has more influential than previous governors following the decision in May 1997 to permit giving the bank the power to set interest rates. The dressing-room to his office was allocated used by the

8 Foreign exchange reserves: Bank of England's foreign exchange reserves on behalf of UK government and intervene in markets on behalf of UK governments. A lively and bustling place, this foreign exchange floor has two things you wouldn't find in any other floor: the dealing screens that work as a hotline to other G7 central banks, and the switchboard through which the bank's own deals are made via a network of approved London brokers. The floor is currently being prepared for January 4, 1998, the date the euro is introduced.

9 Gold vaults (pictured below): Extending two or three floors underground, the vaults contain the gold reserves of some 70 countries. The reserves are protected by an elaborate security system, which includes fire-resistant walls.

10 Restaurant and cafeteria: With the removal of hundreds of regulators to new Financial Services Authority at Canary Wharf, staff facilities are being introduced and surplus property sold through the concrete walls.

11 Library and archives: The bank has an archive going back to its foundation in 1844, including old leather ledgers recording government transactions.

Creditors' rights:

9 Committee room: A new high-tech conference room where the nine-person Monetary Policy Committee sets the interest rates, which govern our mortgage and other borrowing costs. This is where the nine committee members, chaired by the governor, will meet today.

10 Curtain wall: The St. John Square-designed wall is the bank's other face to the City of London and the public. Added in 1920, it was built to symbolise the solidity and safety of the bank (though now the emphasis is on transparency and openness).



11 Deputy governors' offices: There are two deputy governors. Mervyn King is a former LSE economist who now runs the Monetary Policy Committee, which sets interest rates and is regarded as the "brain" of the bank. The other deputy governor is David Clement, formerly of investment bankers Drescher Kleinwort Benson, who is in charge of administering all the bank's other activities.

12 Mezzanine level: Home to the bank's foreign exchange dealers,

THE NEW OIL CRISIS

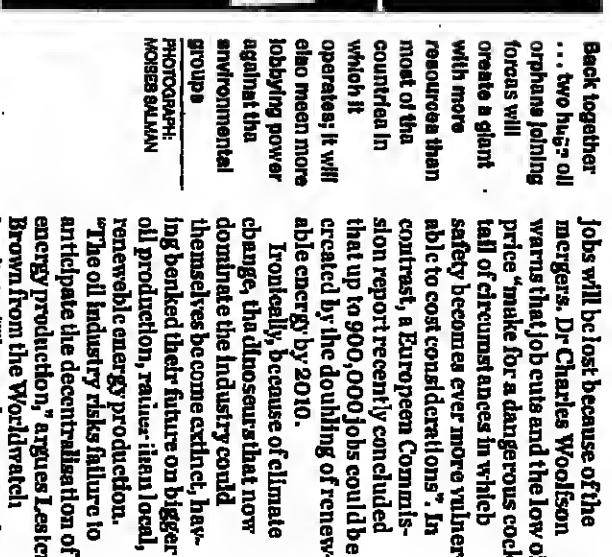


Mick Jagger and Michael Jackson are giving the old order a boost by sending their kids to public school. They'll have it tough says **Peregrine Worsthorne**

which I find very encouraging, but when English progressives are congratulating themselves on having got Old English out the ropes, along come those very international embellishments of modernity — pop stars — to give the old order a shot in the arm. What does this tell us? I would like to think that it tells us that the ideas of an English gentleman, which is pretty well dead and buried in this country, still has some resonance among the people. It may be a little out of fashion, but it is not out of use.



influenced by the fact that it produced George Melly, a bird of their feather, who was my friend there in any day. In fact Stowe has the reputation



something to
say about
this?"

Ah... a
debate. That
should get em

The FWS accounts for only half the annual consumption of electricity, power stations and agriculture take the rest at a price that covers only administrative costs.

market transformation that moves vital services into a productivity that benefits shareholders at the public's financial, social and environmental expense.

WOLFE

You could hear the ghost It is hard to see how the Exxon niles that have dominated the

Much of this exploration will exploit gas. Both merged companies have profitable gas reserves—Exxon, Amoco and Mobil are the top three US companies for worldwide gas reserves, with Exxon and Mobil this top two producers. All signs are that the mergers will delay disinvestment by the oil companies out of hydrocarbons and into renewables. BP, which girded access to Amoco's vast gas reserves, will concentrate on utilizing gas reserves rather than expanding its small renewable subsidiary. Exxon Mobil, the biggest energy company, has no renewable business interest.

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tions (described by advertisers as "extremely strict," but by campaigners from all groups as the most lax in Europe) state that an ad cannot make a child feel that "if they do not have the product or service advertised they will be inferior. In some way they or their children or liable to be held in contempt or ridicule." But how do you regulate that? Most ads for children's toys are pretty dull, to be honest, as any child will tell you: a few chesses for PlayStation ads, maybe the old Lego fan, but these are the high-tech ads.

Even Hannah admits its that most children prefer growing-up advertisements. Nike, for example, has a 10-

February 1983, in his MAP, he complained to the Foreign Office that the ambassador's "understanding" of the situation had ruined his career. Meanwhile, Sir Richard Scott had begun his inquiry into the arms-for-Iraq scandal, at which one of the key witnesses was the former head of the Foreign Office's Middle East Department — a certain David Gore-Booth. It is estimated that the inquiry alone included many of those witty and cultured remarks that have defined the mandarin tradition. "Of course, half a picture can be as accurate," it has been said. "It has been our assumption for generations that, when the Jordanians tell us something, it is true."

Traditions do think

verdicts in quick succession. But the mandarin tradition decrees otherwise. Gore-Bodley was knighted in 1902, promoted to high commissioner in the next New Year honours list, and then to the plum job of British High Commissioner in New Delhi — where, as was soon back on top form, describing Indian officials as "bungling incompetents" and accusing the country's political leaders of "tinkering at windmills". Finally, at 57, he retired. In handing in his resignation, explaining that "I should now like to take on new challenges in the private sector". Luckily old private sector, eh?

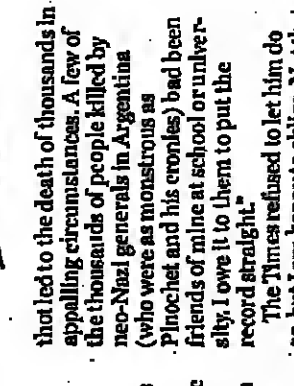
More than a year ago, after Gore-Bodley's undiplomatic antics had effectively sabotaged a visit to India by the Queen and the Foreign Secretary, I asked a simple question: "Why does Lord Cook continue to employ this blundering buffoon?" Sir David doesn't leave the civil service until the end of the month, yet in an interview with the *Times* this week he attacked his own ministers.

There is still time to sack him. But it is plenty of justification. Why not do it

One incredible man

building of Cuba, Lannom informs us that there were "7000 Cubans" in Chile at the time of Pinochet's coup. What, I wonder, became of them? Did they fly to Santiago airport, in spite of the roadblocks, and fly back to the mountains? It would have taken sixty days to spirit them back to the Caribbean. Did they fall into Pinochet's hands? If so, has he killed 20,000 people, not 9,000. Or did he send them all to jail to learn carpentry along with the error of their ways? Are they still there?

ndarin



that led to the death of thousands in appalling circumstances. A few of the thousands of people killed by neo-Nazi generals in Argentina (who were as monstrous as Pinochet and his cronies) had been friends of mine at school or university. I owe it to them to put the record straight.

The Times refused to let him do

so, out into history to change, not just to see, anything is likely to make Landon see sense. "One of the criteria on which the Home Secretary will base his decision," he claims, "is whether the alleged offences are political. That is why the French government refused to extradite David Stirling." It seems astounding that in mid-June, out of Lewicki came a well-thought difference between a whistleblower exposing illegal actions by his employers and an omnipotent dictator who tortured and murdered his own citizens. But what can you expect from a lobby former Chancellor who thinks that lobby sense rules?

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the next New Year honours list, and promoted to the plum job of British High Commissioner in New Delhi — where he was soon back on top form, describing Indian officials as “hungry income seekers” and accusing the country’s political leaders of “tittering at windmills.” Finally, still at summer, he handed in his resignation, explaining that “I should now like to take on new challenges in the private sector.” Luckily old private sector, eh?

More than a year ago, after Gore-Blimpy’s undiplomatic antics had effectively sabotaged a visit to India by the Queen and the Prince of Wales, I asked a simple question: “Why does Rindin Cook continue to employ this blustering buffoon?” Sir David doesn’t leave the civil service until the end of the month, yet in an interview with the Times this week he attacked his own ministers.

There is still time to sack him. There is plenty of justification. Why not do it

Appointments

Service Manager

Part No. SC200 G

Up to £30,405 pa Youth Offending Team

In response to the Crime & Disorder Act and the Government's White Paper on youth crime, Leicestershire City Social Services Department (on behalf of the Council's Crime Reduction and Health - an established multi-agency Youth Offending Team) is seeking a multi-agency Youth Offending Team manager to establish, develop and lead this team and take a lead role in reducing and preventing youth crime in the City of Leicester.

You will be educated to degree level and have a professional qualification in a related field (for example, a social work or probation qualification). You must have at least three years' experience as a senior practitioner or manager in a relevant background and, preferably, two years' experience of work within, or management of, a youth justice related setting. You will need to have a detailed understanding and knowledge of legislation, guidance, research and practice relating to youth justice and experience of working in a multi-agency environment.

Leicestershire is a vibrant, multi-cultural city. It is essential that you have an understanding and awareness of the needs of the various communities within a multi-cultural setting and be able to both recognise and anticipate a range of cultural change over the years. You must, therefore, have experience of managing change and strategic development, be able to define and monitor appropriate standards and performance measures and have excellent oral and written communication skills.

Fixed term secondment on current conditions of service etc. for applicants currently working outside of local authorities can be considered.

Up to the challenge!
Closing date 30th December 1998.
Job offers welcome. No previous experience necessary. The successful candidate will be offered a permanent position.

In continuous pursuit of Quality & Equality

HARINGEY HEALTHCARE NIS Final Locum Clinical Psychologist A Grade (6 months fixed term contract) Spine Point: 26-35 Ref No: PTM 306

Part Time - 5 sessions

Based at St. Ann's Hospital

Applications are invited from qualified Clinical Psychologists with an interest in working with children and young people to a successful, expanding specialist unit. This is a full time post until the end of August 1999, when the possibility may exist for a permanent position.

The successful applicant will primarily be involved with providing outpatient assessment and therapy, in particular the use of a Cognitive - Behavioural approach, as well as other interventions.

The service provides comprehensive treatment for people with eating disorders including individual treatment and family therapy. There is scope for developing group treatment working alongside other members of the team.

You will receive personal supervision and be included in regular review and service development.

Experience of working in this client group is desirable but not essential. For an informal discussion, please contact Dr Alex Pithers, Clinical Psychology Service on 0181 422 4327.

For an application form and job description please contact: Directorate of Human Resource Management, Harrogate Healthcare NIS Trust, St. Ann's Hospital, St. Ann's Road, Harrogate, North Yorkshire, LS17 7TL. Tel: 01423 668899.

We provide a secure two week environment.
Closing date: 6th January 1999
Harrogate Healthcare Trust is working towards equal opportunities and welcomes applications from all sections of the community.
CVs WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.

Head of Service (Children and Families)

£44,000

Based at Leicestershire
Following the current postholder's appointment as Director of a national agency in the Child Care field, a vacancy now exists for a Head of Service whose principal area of responsibility will be Children and Families, including Criminal Justice.

You will be part of the Department Management Team consisting of the Director and three other Heads of Service. You will be responsible for the effective management and delivery of a comprehensive range of services by:
• Providing a high standard of service in terms of quality, planning and cost, and meeting the requirements of the Children's Act 1989 and Social Work.
• Managing designated Service Managers and Service Officers.
• Conducting effective inter-agency relationships with public and voluntary sector organisations.

You will have experience of managing change at senior level and the ability to lead, motivate and develop staff. You will have a proven ability in setting objectives and achieving these within budget, and the ability to develop strategies that will lead to continuous improvement. You will also have a high degree of political awareness and sensitivity, operational knowledge of best practice in Social Work, and hold a diploma in Management and/or child care and have substantial operational and management experience.

You may also be required to undertake the duties of Chief Social Work Officer.
Benefits include 29 day annual holiday, flexible working, contributory pension scheme and an appropriate circumstances, relocation expenses of up to £3,500.

For an informal discussion, please contact Douglas Headly, Director of Housing and Social Work, Tel: 01546 604537.
Application forms and further information are available from: Leicestershire, Adult Officer, Leicestershire House, Leicestershire, Leicestershire, Tel: 01546 604581.

Closing date for receipt of applications is 13th January, 1999.
We are an equal opportunities employer.

INDICT

Chief Executive

INDICT is a non-governmental organisation based in London which campaigns for an international ban on the use of nuclear weapons. You will be responsible for the day-to-day activities of the campaign, possibly in an HQ or charitable body. You should have significant experience in international legal, human rights, social or political issues. You will know how to lobby governments, the UN and the international community effectively and be able to build coalitions with NGOs and other groups. You will need extensive staff management and budgeting experience, and excellent leadership and communication skills.

Salary from £35K.
Please contact INDICT with your CV and letter of application at Box 42001, The Guardian, 104 Deodar Road, Manchester, M20 2BR.

NTO

LANGUAGES NTO Chief Executive (0.5)

The newly formed Languages NTO (National Training Organisation) is seeking a part-time (0.5) Chief Executive to lead the NTO. The successful candidate will have responsibility for developing a wide range of programmes of support for languages in business, providing targeted information and advice for employers and employees, and ensuring the provision of language services.

The successful candidate will have:
• substantial experience in the field of business languages including a knowledge of the National Language Standards;
• a commitment to the importance of foreign language skills in business and employment;
• proven leadership qualities.

Established links with the business world and an understanding of the needs of employers and employees are essential. The successful candidate will be responsible for setting the post and should include a CV when applying to the post.

For further information, please contact: Languages NTO, 20 Deodar Road, Manchester, M20 2BR.
e-mail: languagesnto@btinternet.com
Salary: £20,000 plus pension and expenses
Closing date: 4 January 1999.

PILOTLIGHT

Pilotsight is a small new charity set up by Jane Temora (former of Charity Project Comic Relief) to help develop and drive forward the work on behalf of people who are disadvantaged and disadvantaged.

Believing that money alone is not enough, Pilotsight acts as a catalyst for new forms of social action, through creative partnerships with local agencies, current thinking, and create new ideas for change.

For this important new post, skills and experience of management level in the voluntary sector are a bonus but only if they come with passion, drive, flexibility and initiative. The post will be four days a week at £40,000 per annum.

Pilotsight is also looking for a PROJECT ADMINISTRATOR (0.5 days/week) and a PA TO THE DIRECTOR (0.5 days/week) both at £20,000 per annum.

For further information and an application form please send an A4 s.a.s. to Pilotsight, 15-17 Lincoln's Field, London WC2A 3ED
Closing Date: 11 January 1999

Jazzmatazz

John Fordham

It helps to be pretty

Jazz stars who have made it big usually had to do something other than just play an instrument. Louis Armstrong's success came from his angling trumpet-playing, but from his grumpy persona. Nat Cole, who looked like a lounge-lizard, even wrote a hit single "Nature Boy".

Some of this week's gigs have highlighted the delivery of the half-ance between the musical and the extra-musical. At Ronnie Scott's, Sam & Dave Morris — a flamboyant, theatrical singer on the borders of jazz, soul and pop — is unquestionably giving the audience a lot to look at, but it works without detracting at all from her musical impact. Wearing, swaying, shaking a cascade of red hair and gesturing balletically, she sings a string of songs that are a mix of the world around her.

The mantras of incense, spontaneously (convulsional) sounds of enquiry, defiance and acquiescence threaded around pungent lyrics are carefully crafted with Morris, but their connection to a delirious and personal jazz-pop repertoire keeps the crowd watching and listening to her every move.

The Pizzazz Express in Dean Street, however, something different was taking place. In David McKenna's show, the 18-year-old swing pianist, from the wonderfully titled Rhode Island town of Woonsocket, looks like a spate of General De Gaulle and James Bond's Q. McKenna sits at the keyboard for an hour, says barely a word and plays streams of variations on riffs, melodies of standard material — I Got It From You, Anything But Love, These Boots Are Made for Backing.

Things. The Very Thought of You and countless others which drift by like smoke. But in their sustained invention over an unforgiving left-hand walk, they fuse into the music. Nothing extraneous dumbs McKenna down. He explains the command of the room beyond the music that trickled from his fingers.

McKenna's above-the-line to Kate Donohue's remark to a multi-ethnic audience: "This is a multi-ethnic audience, blues and jazz, everyone, whose family history adds a lot of non-musical baggage to be aware of, announced that special jazz clubs were places where it does not really matter if you played badly, as long as the material is obscure. Neither condition could have applied less to McKenna, and you could have heard a pin drop.



Does my head look big in this? ... Boy George

It would be unfair, however, to claim the fans were there for Culture Club alone. Supporters of ABC and The Human League were just as devoted. In the case of Susan Sulley and her group, it was previous contact with the band that drew them to the gig. The problem wasn't insurmountable when they had youth and foolish hair on their side, but in the last fortnight, late minutes they're merely ancient. In fact, the about that greeted bottom-of-the-bill ABC's encore. The boys, who were always a bit of a mystery, were now a bit of a mystery. The boys, who were always a bit of a mystery, were now a bit of a mystery.

The Human League may have seemed to us in the age of the-Club, but they were always a bit of a mystery. The boys, who were always a bit of a mystery, were now a bit of a mystery. The boys, who were always a bit of a mystery, were now a bit of a mystery.

Does my head look big in this? ... Boy George

"We're all got the flu," he snuffed. "I've got the flu, I've got the flu, I've got the flu." The boys, who were always a bit of a mystery, were now a bit of a mystery. The boys, who were always a bit of a mystery, were now a bit of a mystery.

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Does my head look big in this? ... Boy George



Powerhouse... Dick Morrissey

Arts

Theatre review

Choice 2 ★★★★★

Royal Court Upstairs, London

In the dark of the night, to the beat of a drum, a mini-cab driver plies his trade, the anonymity of his vehicle providing a confessional for the hunted and the haunted. But now he has a more terrible tale to tell than the driver himself.

You wonder how Chris Gace, coyly eloquent Jimmy ever makes any money given the amount of time he spends talking and listening, but when Simon Stephens's play *Leaves* is on, it makes up for it in the building of a character.

Blinded is one of four plays in the second programme of one-act plays by young playwrights at the Royal Court Upstairs. While this is the most accomplished, the others are more than satisfactory in their own right. This season is attracting not only new writers, but, equally important, new audiences. I'd guess that only a fraction of those present on Monday night were over 30.

Sixteen-year-old Alice Wood's *When Brains Don't Count* doesn't live up to its title, but while the piece is unable to negotiate a dynamic between language and the construction, the relationship between the three teenagers growing apart has an authentic ring.

All in the Family by 22-year-old Sara Barr, about a family returning to Ireland to bury their alcoholic mother, has some of the satirical



Coal and Cinders by Ian Maclean

ing ambiguities inherent in short stories. But, although directed and acted with panache, it often seems to be more certain of where it is going than the audience.

This festival is as much about nurturing talent as spotlighting future stars, and it had to put money on a writer and a director who might deliver in the future. I'd go for writer Richard Oberg and director Janette Smith. Their play, *Trade*, is an edgy drama, full of rather baffling religious imagery about food, families, boxing and swimming pools. It feels like early Pynchon.

10 December 18. Box office: 071-486 5000.

Classical reviews

Sumi Jo ★★★★★

Wigmore Hall, London

Hearing Sumi Jo in recital is a bit like watching a rocket launch. It's a bit like watching a rocket launch. It's a bit like watching a rocket launch. It's a bit like watching a rocket launch.

Not all of this worked. It's a fabulous sound — shiny and clear with a bit of voluptuousness. Sumi Jo's vocalism is never less than spectacular, with flowing passages of work, effortless top notes and wonderfully flicked staccatos.

Some of it's a bit mannered, however, and she has a fondness for hugging pianissimo high notes to the point of halting the melodic line in 18th-century music. Her ability to spin extended melismas and to crescendo on one note is first-class.

Not least in Schubert's *Die Winterreise*, which she sings with a beautiful clarity. In her interpretation of the Second Symphony you're acutely aware of an era coming to an end.

After a deceptively expansive Wolf's coy sibilances, she sits in French music, her better. It's in French music, her better. It's in French music, her better.

brevity, that her mixture of

breath and sensuousness really makes a difference. A radiant Chanson Française made me want more Duparc. Delibes's *Waltz de Cadix* sparkled with teasing vivacity. She even turned Debussy's *Jeune fille* into a model of grace and charm. Perhaps next time she'll do what she does best — and give us an all-French programme.

Tim Ashley

LSO/Colin Davis ★★★★★

Barbican, London

Colin Davis's exciting Elgar cycle with the LSO is seemingly straining to be heard. It's a pity that the LSO's sound is so good, but the Elgar cycle is so good, but the Elgar cycle is so good.

At the centre of the cycle come the two works which chart Elgar's vision of the decline of Edwardian Britain — the unbalanced Second Symphony, with falling basses and the opulence and collapse, and the despairing Cello Concerto.

In Davis's interpretation of the Second Symphony you're acutely aware of an era coming to an end. After a deceptively expansive

upbeat opening phrase, Davis

launches into the first movement, unleashing a riot of orchestral colour. The wistful central section — "a sort of malign influence wandering through the summer night in the garden" — is full of ominous terror. The scherzo, Davis rarely lets the tension slacken.

The thrilling funeral march concentrates a feeling of loss and loss of hope. The wistful central section — "a sort of malign influence wandering through the summer night in the garden" — is full of ominous terror.

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Notes & Queries

Quacking up • If the shoe fits • Losing your bottle • Battenberg ache

When was the word "quack" first used to describe a bogus doctor, and what is the association with ducks?

As the Oxford English Dictionary acknowledges, the word is of Dutch origin and was originally a quack-salver, from Dutch *kwakzalver*. The OED suggests as meaning "someone who boasts about the virtues of his 'salves' — salve (Dutch *zalf*) being an ointment."

The *Woordenboek der Nederlanden* (the Dutch equivalent of the OED) gives *kwakzalver* which, unlike English "quack", does not mean "to sound like a duck", but "to move like a duck" to move around unsteadily to reel, lurch, stagger. So the meaning "quack", also suggested by the OED, seems more appropriate.

Prody van Hove, Merselbe, Belgium.

The inscription "Galeonius Bon Leo Sclonius" is cast into an old brass bell recently acquired for the collection of the British Museum. It is a Latin inscription, can anyone translate it?

Yes I can. This bell should not, under any circumstances, be gate-slid mounted. The bell is a slide mounted. The bell is a slide mounted. The bell is a slide mounted.

My grandfather had a similar small bell decorated with various crests and Latin inscriptions. It was a misreading of *Galvanes* which was on his bell. The bell is a slide mounted. The bell is a slide mounted. The bell is a slide mounted.

When the family dropped the name Battenberg, did it do so legally by deed poll, or did they just start going around calling themselves Windsor?

Queen Victoria's own answer tells us the name of the British royal family between 1774, when the new dynasty succeeded to the throne, and 1917, when George V changed the family name by adoption. The family name by adoption was a thoroughly German practice.

What's so terrible about snakes oil salve? Why have they become a byword for untrustworthy comment?

When did meat/beacon suppliers start adding water to the product before selling it to the public?

When was the last Post first used at military funerals? Is it around? Does it?



Ducks and quacks... both traditionally state on thin ice

In 1898 one of Queen Victoria's subjects wrote to her asking what her surname was. She replied "Queen Victoria of the House of Brunswick" (see Life With Queen Victoria: Marie Mallett Letters From Court (1968)). The Quaff family descended from a South German count called Well who died about AD 925. His male descendants became extinct in 1064 and their houses married the Marquess of Zetia. There were two sons of the marriage. The older became Duke of Bavaria, and the descendant were known as the Well (Quaff) family.

The younger son was ancestor of the Duke of Modena and Ferrara who bore the family name of Este. One of this younger line was made Duke of Brunswick-Lüneburg in the early 13th century; his remote descendant became Elector of Hanover in 1692, and his son became King George I of England in 1714.

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League of Nations

How hard do MPs work?

As our MPs prepare to vote themselves an extra week of holiday — on top of the 17 a year they already enjoy — we take a look at how the official hours of Britain's lawmakers compare to those of their foreign counterparts. The first of our weekly snapshots of Britain's place in the world ranks countries according to the number of days their parliamentarians rest last year.

Rank	Country	No. of days
1	United States	289
2	Costa Rica	187
3	Brazil	186
4	Japan	180
5	Belgium	178
6	France	120
7	Germany	80
8	Britain	66
9	Switzerland	48
10	El Salvador	48

British MPs hunkering down for the winter of their legislative world would have a short shrift from their American counterparts. US congressmen are the only parliamentarians in the world who are not on holiday for the year.

Although the rest of the world's parliamentarians probably have less to do, they certainly spend a lot less time doing it. El Salvador's eager parliamentarians are the only ones to take a week's holiday in the business of democratic debate but their parliamentarians' willingness to work through the brutal summer months.

Such selflessness would be lost on Europe's parliamentarians, who almost without exception expect clear skies in July and August. But the Germans only have a week's holiday in the summer months, although their 18 weeks of work are due to 22 if pressing matters arise. Politicians in East Germany's Landtag have a week's holiday in the summer months, although their 18 weeks of work are due to 22 if pressing matters arise.

Early voting in the French National Assembly's hasty constitutional device replacing a maximum of 120 days should be aware of the fact that the French parliamentarians are not all fun, you know.

Claire Phipps

Any answers?

Why are there no lady garden gnomes?

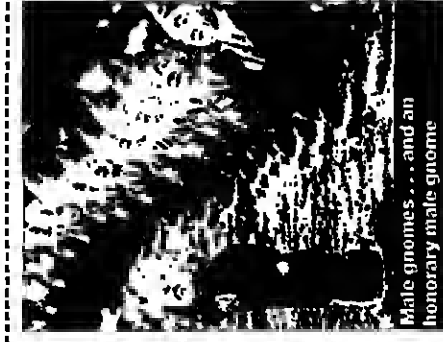
James Atwood, Baccup, Luton.

Has religion ever atopped a war?

Patrik Curry, London W14.

My wife says one should never fill the bath with water from the hot tap because of the bugs which inhabit hot water systems. Does this hold true when you have a combination boiler, where water is heated naturally as it moves straight from the heating main?

Peter White, Whitley Bay, Tyne & Wear.



Radio gnomes — and an honorary male gnomes

What goes around comes around. Does it?

Gary Lancelotti, Welhamston, London.

When was the last Post first used at military funerals? Is it around? Does it?

Walter Eilan, London NW6.

What's so terrible about snakes oil salve? Why have they become a byword for untrustworthy comment?

When did meat/beacon suppliers start adding water to the product before selling it to the public?

When was the last Post first used at military funerals? Is it around? Does it?

When talks...
Snow rules...
You get you...
J



GEORGE CHAUCER

Geoffrey Chaucer
c.1340-1400
English poet, writer, and diplomat. He is best known for his work *The Canterbury Tales*, a collection of stories that are considered the first great work of English literature.



CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE

Christopher Marlowe
c.1562-1593
English playwright and poet. He is best known for his play *Tamburlaine the Great*, which is considered one of the greatest English tragedies.



DANIEL DEFOE

Daniel Defoe
1660-1731
English novelist, journalist, and pamphlet writer. He is best known for his novel *Robinson Crusoe*, which is considered one of the first English novels.



SOMERSET MAUGHAM

Somerset Maugham
1874-1947
English writer, novelist, and playwright. He is best known for his novel *M. C. of East and West*, which is considered one of the greatest English novels.



GRAHAM GREENE

Graham Greene
1904-1991
English writer, novelist, and playwright. He is best known for his novel *Bombay*, which is considered one of the greatest English novels.



IAN FLEMING

Ian Fleming
1914-1964
English writer, novelist, and playwright. He is best known for his novel *James Bond*, which is considered one of the greatest English novels.



JOHN LE CARRÉ

John Le Carré
1917-1999
English writer, novelist, and playwright. He is best known for his novel *Smiley's People*, which is considered one of the greatest English novels.

Spooks stacked on the shelves

Fay Weldon is the latest in the long line of authors with shady secret service connections. Jean-Paul Filtott investigates

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Comedy in crisis

With the rise of cable and the fall of Seinfeld, America's biggest network is in turmoil. Michael Ellison reports

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